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OF

MISS THACKERAY

VOLUME III.

FIVE OLD FRIENDS and A YOUNG PRINCE

LONDON
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FIVE OLD FRIENDS

AND

A YOUNG PRINCE

BY

MISS THACKERAY

LONDON
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1895

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FIVE OLD FRIENDS

DEDICATED TO

FIVE YOUNG PRINCESSES

A. C. R. | M. T. S.
A. H. | A. M.
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THE SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE WOOD

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THE SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE WOOD.

A KIND enchantress one day put into my hand a mystic volume prettily lettered and bound in green, saying, 'I am so fond of this book. It has all the dear old fairy tales in it; one never tires of them. Do take it.'

I carried the little book away with me, and spent a very pleasant quiet evening at home by the fire, with H. at the opposite corner, and other old friends, whom I felt I had somewhat neglected of late. Jack and the Beanstalk, Puss in Boots, the gallant and quixotic Giantkiller, and dearest Cinderella, whom we every one of us must have loved, I should think, ever since we first knew her in her little brown pinafore: I wondered, as I shut them all up for the night between their green boards, what it was that made these stories so fresh and so vivid. Why did not they fall to pieces, vanish, explode, disappear, like so many of their contemporaries and descendants? And yet

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far from being forgotten and passing away, it would seem as if each generation in turn as it came into the world looks to be delighted still by the brilliant pageant, and never tires or wearies of it. And on their side the princes and princesses never seem to grow any older; the castles and the lovely gardens flourish without need of repair or whitewash, or plumbers or glaziers. The princesses' gowns, too—sun, moon, and star-colour,—do not wear out or pass out of fashion or require altering. Even the seven-leagued boots do not appear to be the worse for wear. Numbers of realistic stories for children have passed away. Little Henry and his Bearer, and Poor Harry and Lucy, have very nearly given up their little artless ghosts and prattle, and ceased making their own beds for the instruction of less excellently brought-up little boys and girls, and notwithstanding a very interesting article in the *Saturday Review*, it must be owned that Harry Sandford and Tommy Merton are not familiar playfellows in our nurseries and schoolrooms, and have passed somewhat out of date. But not so all these centenarians—Prince Riquet, Carabas, Little Red Riding-hood, Bluebeard and others. They seem as if they would never grow old. They play with the children, they amuse the elders, there seems no end to their fund of spirits and perennial youth.

H., to whom I made this remark, said from the opposite chimney-corner, 'No wonder; the stories are only

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histories of real living persons turned into fairy princes and princesses. Fairy stories are everywhere and every-day. We are all princes and princesses in disguise, or ogres or wicked dwarfs. All these histories are the histories of human nature, which does not seem to change very much in a thousand years or so, and we don't get tired of the fairies because they are so true to it.'

After this little speech of H.'s, we spent an unprofitable half-hour reviewing our acquaintance, and classing them under their real characters and qualities. We had dined with Lord Carabas only the day before and met Puss in Boots—Beauty and the Beast were also there; we uncharitably counted up, I am ashamed to say, no less than six Bluebeards. Jack and the Beanstalk we had met just starting on his climb. A Red Riding-hood; a girl with toads dropping from her mouth: we knew three or four of each. Cinderellas—alas! who does not know more than one dear, poor, pretty Cinderella? and, as for sleeping Princesses in the Woods, how many one can reckon up! Young, old, ugly, pretty, awakening, sleeping still.

'Do you remember Cecilia Lulworth,' said H., 'and Dorlicote? Poor Cecilia!' Some lives are *couleur de rose*, people say; others seem to be, if not *couleur de rose* all through, yet full of bright, beautiful tints, blues, pinks, little bits of harmonious cheerfulness. Other lives, if not so brilliant, and seeming more or less grey at

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times, are very sweet and gentle in tone, with faint gleams of gold or lilac to brighten them. And then again others are black and hopeless from the beginning. Besides all these, there are some which have always appeared to me as if they were of a dark, dull hue; a dingy, heavy brown, which no happiness, or interest, or bright colour could ever enliven. Blues turn sickly, roses seem faded, and yellow lilacs look red and ugly upon these heavy backgrounds. 'Poor Cecilia,' as H. called her,—hers had always seemed to me one of these latter existences, unutterably dull, commonplace, respectable, stinted, ugly, and useless.

Lulworth Hall, with the great dark park bounded by limestone walls, with iron gates here and there, looked like a blot upon the bright and lovely landscape. The place from a distance, compared with the surrounding country, was a blur and a blemish, as it were, sad, silent, solitary.

Travellers passing by sometimes asked if the place was uninhabited, and were told, 'No, shure—the fam'ly lives thear all the yeaurr round.' Some charitable souls might wonder what life could be like behind those dull gates. One day a young fellow riding by saw rather a sweet woman's face gazing for an instant through the bars, and he went on his way with a momentary thrill of pity. Need I say that it was poor Cecilia who looked out vacantly to see who was passing along the high-road.

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She was surrounded by hideous moreen, oil-cloth, punctuality, narrow-mindedness, horsehair, and mahogany. Loud bells rang at intervals, regular, monotonous. Surly but devoted attendants waited upon her. She was rarely alone; her mother did not think it right that a girl in Cecilia's position should 'race' about the grounds unattended; as for going outside the walls it was not to be thought of. When Cecilia went out, with her gloves on, and her goloshes, her mother's companion, Miss Bowley, walked beside her up and down the dark laurel walk at the back of the house,—up and down, down and up, up and down. 'I think I am getting tired, Maria,' Miss Lulworth would say at last. 'If so, we had better return to the hall,' Maria would reply, 'although it is before our time.' And then they would walk home in silence, between the iron railings and laurel-bushes.

As Cecilia walked erectly by Miss Bowley's side, the rooks went whirling over their heads, the slugs crept sleepily along the path under the shadow of the grass and the weeds; they heard no sounds except the cawing of the birds, and the distant monotonous hacking noise of the gardener and his boy digging in the kitchen-garden.

Cecilia, peeping into the long drab drawing-room on her return, might perhaps see her mother, erect and dignified, at her open desk, composing, writing, crossing, re-writing, an endless letter to an indifferent cousin in Ireland, with a single candle and a small piece of blotting-

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paper, and a pen-wiper made of ravellings, all spread out before her.

'You have come home early, Cecil,' says the lady, without looking up. 'You had better make the most of your time, and practise till the dressing-bell rings. Maria will kindly take up your things.'

And then in the chill twilight Cecilia sits down to the jangling instrument with the worn silk flutings. A faded rack it is upon which her fingers have been distended ever since she can remember. A great many people think there is nothing in the world so good for children as scoldings, whippings, dark cupboards, and dry bread and water, upon which they expect them to grow up into tall, fat, cheerful, amiable men and women; and a great many people think that for grown-up young people the silence, the chillness, the monotony, and sadness of their own fading twilight days is all that is required. Mrs. Lulworth and Maria Bowley her companion, Cecilia's late governess, were quite of this opinion. They themselves, when they were little girls, had been slapped, snubbed, locked up in closets, thrust into bed at all sorts of hours, flattened out on backboards, set on high stools to play the piano for days together, made to hem frills five or six weeks long, and to learn immense pieces of poetry, so that they had to stop at home all the afternoon. And though Mrs. Lulworth had grown up stupid, suspicious, narrow-minded, soured, and overbearing, and had married

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for an establishment, and Miss Bowley, her governess's daughter, had turned out nervous, undecided, melancholy, and anxious, and had never married at all, yet they determined to bring up Cecilia as they themselves had been brought up, and sincerely thought they could not do better.

When Mrs. Lulworth married, she said to Maria, 'You must come and live with me, and help to educate my children some day, Maria. For the present I shall not have a home of my own; we are going to reside with my husband's aunt, Mrs. Dormer. She is a very wealthy person, far advanced in years. She is greatly annoyed with Mr. and Mrs. John Lulworth's vagaries, and she has asked me and my husband to take their places at Dorlicote Hall.' At the end of ten years Mrs. Lulworth wrote again:—'We are now permanently established in our aunt's house. I hear you are in want of a situation; pray come and superintend the education of my only child Cecilia (she is named after her godmother, Mrs. Dormer). She is now nearly three years old, and I feel that she begins to require some discipline.'

This letter had been written at that same desk twenty-two years before Cecilia began her practising this autumn evening. She was twenty-five years old now, but like a child in experience, in ignorance, in placidity; a fortunate stolidity and slowness of temperament had saved her from being crushed and nipped in the bud, as it were.

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She was not bored because she had never known any other life. It seemed to her only natural that all days should be alike, rung in and out by the jangling breakfast, lunch, dinner, and prayer bells. Mr. Dormer—a little chip of a man—read prayers suitable for every day in the week; the servants filed in, maids first, then the men. Once Cecilia saw one of the maids blush and look down smiling as she marched out after the others. Miss Dormer wondered a little, and thought she would ask Susan why she looked so strangely; but Susan married the groom soon after, and went away, and Cecilia never had an opportunity of speaking to her.

Night after night Mr. Dormer replaced his spectacles with a click, and pulled up his shirt-collar when the service was ended. Night after night old Mrs. Dormer coughed a little moaning cough. If she spoke, it was generally to make some little bitter remark. Every night she shook hands with her nephew and niece, kissed Cecilia's blooming cheek, and patted out of the room. She was a little woman with starling eyes. She had never got over her husband's death. She did not always know when she moaned. She dressed in black, and lived alone in her turret, where she had various old-fashioned occupations—tatting, camphor-boxes to sort, a real old spinning-wheel and distaff among other things, at which Cecilia, when she was a child, had pricked her fingers trying to make it whirr as her aunt did. Spinning-

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wheels have quite gone out, but I know of one or two old ladies who still use them. Mrs. Dormer would go nowhere, and would see no one. So at least her niece, the master-spirit, declared, and the old lady got to believe it at last. I don't know how much the fear of the obnoxious John and his wife and children may have had to do with this arrangement.

When her great aunt was gone it was Cecilia's turn to gather her work together at a warning sign from her mother, and walk away through the long chilly passages to her slumbers in the great green four-post bed. And so time passed. Cecilia grew up. She had neither friends nor lovers. She was not happy nor unhappy. She could read, but she never cared to open a book. She was quite contented; for she thought Lulworth Hall the finest place, and its inmates the most important people in the world. She worked a great deal, embroidering interminable quilts and braided toilet-covers and fish-napkins. She never thought of anything but the uttermost common-places and platitudes. She considered that being respectable and decorous, and a little pompous and overbearing, was the duty of every well-brought-up lady and gentleman. To-night she banged away very placidly at Rhodes' air, for the twentieth time breaking down in the same passage and making the same mistake, until the dressing-bell rang, and Cecilia, feeling she had done her duty, then extinguished her candle, and went upstairs across the

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great chill hall, up the bare oil-cloth gallery, to her room.

Most young women have some pleasure, whatever their troubles may be, in dressing, and pretty trinkets, and beads and ribbons and necklaces. An unconscious love of art and intuition leads some of them, even plain ones, to adorn themselves. The colours and ribbon ends brighten bright faces, enliven dull ones, deck what is already loveable, or, at all events, make the most of what materials there are. Even a may-pole, crowned and flowered and tastily ribboned, is a pleasing object. And, indeed, the art of decoration seems to me a charming natural instinct, and one which is not nearly enough encouraged, and a gift which every woman should try to acquire. Some girls, like birds, know how to weave, out of ends of rags, of threads and morsels and straws, a beautiful whole, a work of real genius for their habitation. Frivolities, say some; waste of time, say others,—expense, vanity. The strong-minded dowagers shake their heads at it all—Mrs.Lulworth among them; only why had Nature painted Cecilia's cheeks of brightest pink, instead of bilious orange, like poor Maria Bowley's? why was her hair all crisp and curly? and were her white even teeth, and her clear grey eyes, vanity and frivolity too? Cecilia was rather too stout for her age; she had not much expression in her face. And no wonder. There was not much to be expressive about in her poor little stinted life. She could

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not go into raptures over the mahogany sideboard, the camphine lamp in the drawing-room, the four-post beds indoors, the laurel-bushes without, the Moorish temple with yellow glass windows, or the wigwam summer-house, which were the alternate boundaries of her daily walks.

Cecilia was not allowed a fire to dress herself by: a grim maid, however, attended, and I suppose she was surrounded, as people say, by every comfort. There was a horsehair sofa, with a creaking writing-table before it, a metal inkstand, a pair of plated candlesticks: everything was large, solid, brown, as I have said, grim, and in its place. The rooms at Lulworth Hall did not take the impress of their inmate, the inmate was moulded by the room. There were in Cecilia's no young-lady-like trifles lying here and there; upon the chest of drawers there stood a mahogany workbox, square, with a key, and a faded needle-book and darning-cotton inside,—a little dusty chenille, I believe, was to be seen round the clock on the chimney-piece, and a black and white check dressing-gown and an ugly little pair of slippers were set out before the toilet-table. On the bed, Cecilia's dinner costume was lying—a sickly green dress, trimmed with black—and a white flower for her hair. On the toilet-table an old-fashioned jasper serpent-necklace and a set of amethysts were displayed for her to choose from, also mittens and a couple of hair-bracelets. The girl was quite content, and

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she would go down gravely to dinner, smoothing out her hideous toggery.

Mrs. Dormer never came down before dinner. All day long she stayed up in her room, dozing and trying remedies, and occasionally looking over old journals and letters until it was time to come downstairs. She liked to see Cecilia's pretty face at one side of the table, while her nephew carved, and Mrs. Lulworth recounted any of the stirring events of the day. Mrs. Dormer was used to the life—she was sixty when they came to her, she was long past eighty now—the last twenty years had been like a long sleep, with the dream of what happened when she was alive and in the world continually passing before her.

When the Lulworths first came to her she had been in a low and nervous state, only stipulated for quiet and peace, and that no one was to come to her house of mourning. The John Lulworths, a cheery couple, broke down at the end of a month or two, and preferred giving up all chance of their aunt's great inheritance to living in such utter silence and seclusion. Upon Charles, the younger brother, and his wife, the habit had grown, until now anything else would have been toil and misery to them. Except the old rector from the village, the doctor now and then, no other human creature ever crossed the threshold. 'For Cecilia's sake,' Miss Bowley once ventured to hint,—'would it not be desirable to see a little more society? . . . .'

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'Cecilia with her expectations has the whole world before her, Maria!' said Mrs. Lulworth, severely; and indeed to this foolish woman it seemed as if money would add more to her daughter's happiness than the delights, the wonders, the interests, the glamours of youth. Charles Lulworth, shrivelled, selfish, dull, worn-out, did not trouble his head about Cecilia's happiness, and let his wife do as she liked with the girl.

This especial night when Cecilia came down in her ugly green dress, it seemed to her as if something unusual had been going on. The old lady's eyes looked bright and glittering, her father seemed more animated than usual, her mother looked mysterious and put out. It might have been fancy, but Cecilia thought they all stopped talking as she came into the room; but then dinner was announced, and her father offered Mrs. Dormer his arm immediately, and they went into the dining-room.

It must have been fancy. Everything was as usual. 'They have put up a few hurdles in Dalron's field, I see,' said Mrs. Lulworth. 'Charles, you ought to give orders for repairing the lock of the harness-room.'

'Have they seen to the pump-handle?' said Mr. Lulworth.

'I think not.' And then there was a dead silence.

'Potatoes,' said Cecilia to the footman. 'Mamma, we saw ever so many slugs in the laurel walk, Maria and

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I,—didn't we, Maria? I think there are a great many slugs in our place.'

Old Mrs. Dormer looked up while Cecilia was speaking, and suddenly interrupted her in the middle of her sentence. 'How old are you, child?' she said; 'are you seventeen or eighteen?'

'Eighteen! aunt Cecilia. I am five-and-twenty,' said Cecilia, staring.

'Good gracious! is it possible?' said her father, surprised.

'Cecil is a woman now,' said her mother.

'Five-and-twenty,' said the old lady, quite crossly. 'I had no idea time went so fast. She ought to have been married long ago; that is, if she means to marry at all.'

'Pray, my dear aunt, do not put such ideas—' Mrs. Lulworth began.

'I don't intend to marry,' said Cecilia, peeling an orange, and quite unmoved, and she slowly curled the rind of her orange in the air. 'I think people are very stupid to marry. Look at poor Jane Simmonds—her husband beats her; Jones saw her.'

'So you don't intend to marry!' said the old lady, with an odd inflection in her voice. 'Young ladies were not so wisely brought up in my early days,' and she gave a great sigh. 'I was reading an old letter this morning from my brother John, your poor father, Charles—all

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about happiness, and love in a cot, and two little curly-headed boys—Jack, you know, and yourself. I should rather like to see Jack again.'

'What, my dear aunt, after his unparalleled audacity? I declare the thought of his impudent letter makes my blood boil,' exclaimed Mrs. Lulworth.

'Does it?' said the old lady. 'Cecilia, my dear, you must know that your uncle has discovered that the entail was not cut off from a certain property which my father left me, and which I brought to my husband. He has therefore written me a very business-like letter, in which he says he wishes for no alteration at present, but begs that, in the event of my making my will, I should remember this, and not complicate matters by leaving it to yourself, as had been my intention. I see nothing to offend in the request. Your mother thinks differently.'

Cecilia was so amazed at being told anything that she only stared again, and opening a wide mouth, popped into it such a great piece of orange that she could not speak for some minutes.

'Cecilia has certainly attained years of discretion,' said her great-aunt; 'she does not compromise herself by giving any opinion on matters she does not understand.' Then the old lady got up and slowly led the way back to the drawing-room again, across the great empty hall.

Notwithstanding her outward imperturbability, Cecilia was a little stirred and interested by this history, and by

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the short conversation which had preceded it, and after an hour's silence she ceased working, and looked up from the embroidered shaving-cloth she was making. Her mother was sitting upright in her chair as usual, netting with vigorous action. Her large foot outstretched, her stiff bony hands working and jerking monotonously. Her father was dozing in his arm-chair; old Mrs. Dormer, too, was nodding in her corner. The monotonous Maria was stitching in the lamplight. Grey and black shadows loomed all round her. The far end of the room was quite dark; the great curtains swept from their ancient cornices. Cecilia, for the first time in all her life, wondered whether she should live all her life in this spot,—ever go away? It seemed impossible, unnatural, that she should ever do so. Silent, dull as it was, she was used to it, and did not know what was amiss. . . . Was anything amiss? Mrs. Charles Lulworth certainly seemed to think so. She made the tea in frowns and silence, and closed the lid of the teapot with a clink which re-echoed through the room.

Young Frank Lulworth, the lawyer of the family—John Lulworth's eldest son—it was who had found it all out. His father wrote that with Mrs. Dormer's permission he proposed coming down in a day or two to show her the papers, and to explain to her personally how the matter stood. 'My son and I,' said John Lulworth, 'both feel that this would be far more agreeable to our feelings, and perhaps

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to yours, than having recourse to the usual professional intervention, for we have no desire to press our claims for the present, and we only wish that in the ultimate disposal of your property you should be aware how the matter really stands. We have always been led to suppose that the estate actually in question has been long destined by you for your grand-niece, Cecilia Lulworth. I hear from our old friend Dr. Hicks, that she is remarkably pretty and very amiable. Perhaps such vague possibilities are best unmentioned, but it has occurred to me that in the event of a mutual understanding springing up between the young folks,—my son and your grand-niece,—the connection might be agreeable to us all, and lead to a renewal of that family intercourse which has been, to my great regret, suspended for some time past.'

Old Mrs. Dormer, in her shaky Italian handwriting, answered her nephew's letter by return of post:—

'My dear Nephew,—I must acknowledge the receipt of your epistle of the 13th instant. By all means invite your son to pay us his proposed visit. We can talk over business matters at our leisure, and young Francis can be introduced to his relatives. Although a long time has elapsed since we last met, believe me, my dear nephew, not unmindful of bygone associations, and yours very truly always,

'C. DORMER.'

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The letter was in the postman's bag when old Mrs. Dormer informed Mrs. Charles of what she had done.

Frank Lulworth thought that in all his life he had never seen anything so dismal, so silent, so neglected, as Dorlicote Park, when he drove up a few days after, through the iron gates and along the black laurel wilderness which led to the house. The laurel branches, all unpruned, untrained, were twisting savagely in and out, wreathing and interlacing one another, clutching tender shootings, wrestling with the young oak-trees and the limes. He passed by black and sombre avenues leading to mouldy temples, to crumbling summer-houses; he saw what had once been a flower-garden, now all run to seed—wild, straggling, forlorn; a broken-down bench, a heap of hurdles lying on the ground, a field-mouse darting across the road, a desolate autumn sun shining upon all this mouldering ornament and confusion. It seemed more forlorn and melancholy by contrast, somehow, coming as he did out of the loveliest country and natural sweetness into the dark and tangled wilderness within these limestone walls of Dorlicote.

The parish of Dorlicote-cum-Rockington looks prettier in the autumn than at any other time. A hundred crisp tints, jewelled rays—greys, browns, purples, glinting golds, and silvers, rustle and sparkle upon the branches of the nut-trees, of the bushes and thickets. Soft blue

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mists and purple tints rest upon the distant hills; scarlet berries glow among the brown leaves of the hedges; lovely mists fall and vanish suddenlv, revealing bright and sweet autumnal sights; blackberries, stacks of corn, brown leaves crisping upon the turf, great pears hanging sweetening in the sun over the cottage lintels, cows grazing and whisking their tails, blue smoke curling from the tall farm chimneys: all is peaceful, prosperous, golden. You can see the sea on clear days from certain knolls and hillocks. . . .

Out of all these pleasant sights young Lulworth came into this dreary splendour. He heard no sounds of life—he saw no one. His coachman had opened the iron gate. 'They doan't keep no one to moind the gate,' said the driver; 'only tradesmen cooms to th'ouse.' Even the gardener and his boy were out of the way; and when they got sight of the house at last, many of the blinds were down and shutters shut, and only two chimneys were smoking. There was some one living in the place, however, for a watch-dog who was lying asleep in his kennel woke up and gave a heart-rending howl when Frank got out and rang at the bell.

He had to wait an immense time before anybody answered, although a little page in buttons came and stared at him in blank amazement from one of the basement windows, and never moved. Through the same window Frank could see into the kitchen, and he was

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amused when a sleepy fat cook came up behind the little page and languidly boxed his ears, and ordered him off the premises.

The butler, who at last answered the door, seemed utterly taken aback—nobody had called for months past, and here was a perfect stranger taking out his card, and asking for Mrs. Dormer as if it was the most natural thing in the world. The under-butler was half asleep in his pantry, and had not heard the door-bell. The page—the very same whose ears had been boxed—came wondering to the door, and went to ascertain whether Mrs. Dormer would see the gentleman or not.

'What a vault, what a catacomb, what an ugly old place!' thought Frank, as he waited. He heard steps far, far away: then came a long silence, and then a heavy tread slowly approaching, and the old butler beckoned to him to follow—through a cobweb-colour room, through a brown room, through a grey room, into a great dim drab drawing-room, where the old lady was sitting alone. She had come down her back stairs to receive him; it was years since she had left her room before dinner.

Even old ladies look kindly upon a tall, well-built, good-looking, good-humoured young man. Frank's nose was a little too long, his mouth a little too straight; but he was a handsome young fellow with a charming manner. Only as he came up he was somewhat shy and undecided —he did not know exactly how to address the old lady.

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This was his great-aunt. He knew nothing whatever about her, but she was very rich; she had invited him to come, and she had a kind face, he thought: should he—ought he to embrace her—perhaps he ought, and he made the slightest possible movement in this direction. Mrs. Dormer, divining his object, pushed him weakly away. 'How do you do? No embraces, thank you. I don't care for kissing at my age. Sit down—there, in that chair opposite—and now tell me about your father, and all the family, and about this ridiculous discovery of yours. I don't believe a word of it.'

The interview between them was long and satisfactory on the whole. The unconscious Cecilia and Miss Bowley returned that afternoon from their usual airing, and as it happened, Cecilia said, 'Oh, Maria! I left my mittens in the drawing-room last might. I will go and fetch them.' And little thinking of what was awaiting her, she flung open the door and marched in through the ante-room—mushroom hat and brown veil, goloshes and dowdy gown, as usual. 'What is this?' thought young Lulworth: 'why, who would have supposed it was such a pretty girl?' for suddenly the figure stopped short, and a lovely fresh face looked up in utter amazement out of the hideous disguise.

'There, don't stare, child,' said the old lady. 'This is Francis Lulworth, a very intelligent young man, who has got hold of your fortune and ruined all your chances, my

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dear. He wanted to embrace me just now. Francis, you may as well salute your cousin instead: she is much more of an age for such compliments,' said Mrs. Dormer, waving her hand.

The impassive Cecilia, perfectly bewildered and not in the least understanding, only turned her great sleepy astonished eyes upon her cousin, and stood perfectly still as if she was one of those beautiful wax dolls one sees stuck up to be stared at. And, indeed, a stronger-minded person than Cecilia might have been taken aback, who had come into the drawing-room to fetch her mittens, to be met in such an astounding fashion. If she had been surprised before, utter consternation can scarcely convey her state of mind when young Lulworth stepped forward and obeyed her aunt's behest. Frank, half laughing, half kindly, seeing that Cecilia stood quite still and stared at him, supposed it was expected, and did as he was told.

The poor girl gave one gasp of horror, and blushed for the first time, I believe, in the course of her whole existence. Bowley, fixed and open-mouthed from the inner room, suddenly fled with a scream, which recalled Cecilia to a sense of outraged propriety: for, blushing and blinking more deeply, she at last gave three little sobs, and then, O horror! burst into tears!

'Highty-tighty; what a much ado about nothing!' said the old lady, losing her temper and feeling not a

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little guilty, and much alarmed as to what her niece Mrs. Lulworth might say were she to come on the scene.

'I beg your pardon. I am so very, very sorry,' said the young man, quite confused and puzzled. 'I ought to have known better. I frightened you. I am your cousin, you know, and really—pray, pray excuse my stupidity,' he said, looking anxiously into the fair placid face along which the tears were coursing in two streams, like a child's.

'Such a thing never happened in all my life before,' said Cecilia. 'I know it is wrong to cry, but really—really——'

'Leave off crying directly, miss,' said her aunt, testily, 'and let us have no more of this nonsense.' The old lady dreaded the mother's arrival every instant. Frank, half laughing, but quite unhappy at the poor girl's distress, had taken up his hat to go that minute, not knowing what else to do.

'Ah! you're going,' says old Mrs. Dormer; 'no wonder. Cecilia, you have driven your cousin away by your rudeness.'

'I'm not rude,' sobbed Cecilia. 'I can't help crying.

'The girl is a greater idiot than I took her for,' cried the old lady. 'She has been kept here locked up, until she has not a single idea left in her silly noddle. No man of sense could endure her for five minutes. You wish to leave the place, I see, and no wonder?'

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'I really think,' said Frank, 'that under the circumstances it is the best thing I can do. Miss Lulworth, I am sure, would wish me to go.'

'Certainly,' said Cecilia. 'Go away, pray go away. Oh, how silly I am.'

Here was a catastrophe!

The poor old fairy was all puzzled and bewildered: her arts were powerless in this emergency. The princess had awakened, but in tears. Although he had said he was going, the prince still stood by, distressed and concerned, feeling horribly guilty, and yet scarcely able to help laughing; and at this instant, to bring matters to a climax, Mrs. Lulworth's gaunt figure appeared at the drawing-room door.

'I wash my hands of the whole concern,' said Mrs. Dormer, limping off to her corner in a great hurry and flutter. 'Your daughter is only a few degrees removed from an idiot, ma'am.'

Poor Cecilia! her aunt's reproaches only scared her more and more; and for the first time in her life she was bewildered, discomposed, forgetful of hours. It was the hour of calisthenics; but Miss Lulworth forgot everything that might have been expected from a young lady of her admirable bringing-up.

'O, mamma, I didn't mean to be rude,' repeated Cecilia, crying still, and the sweet, wet, vacant face looked im-

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ploringly and despairingly up into Frank's. 'I'm so sorry, please forgive me,' she said.

He looked so kind, so amused, so gentle and handsome that Cecilia actually felt less afraid of him at this moment than she did of her mother, who, with tight lips and sharp eyes, was surveying the two.

'Go and take off your goloshes and your walking-dress, Cecilia,' said Mrs. Lulworth, exactly in her usual voice, 'and do not come down without your apron.'

In a few minutes, when Cecilia returned, blushing and more lovely than ever, in her great apron and dark stuff dress, it was to find her cousin comfortably installed in a big easy chair, and actually talking above his breath to Miss Bowley. He sprang up and came to meet the girl, and held out his hand, 'In token that you forgive me,' he said.

'I thought it was I who had been rude and unkind,' Cecilia falteringly said. 'How good of you not to be vexed.'

'Cecilia,' said Mrs. Lulworth and Miss Bowley both at once, in different tones of warning; but the princess was awake now, and her simplicity and beauty touched the young prince, who never, I think, really intended to go, even when he took up his hat. Fairy tales are never very long, and this one ought to come to an end.

Certainly the story would not have been worth the

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telling if they had not been married soon after, and lived happily all the rest of their lives.

* * * * * *

It is not in fairy tales only that things fall out as one could wish, and indeed, as H. and I agreed the other night that fairies, although invisible, have not entirely vanished out of the land.

It is certainly like a fairy transformation to see Cecilia now-a-days in her own home with her children and husband about her. Bright, merry, full of sympathy and interest, she seems to grow prettier every minute.

When Frank fell in love with her and proposed, old Mrs. Dormer insisted upon instantly giving up the Dorlicote Farm for the young people to live in. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Lulworth are obliged to live in London, but they go there every summer with their children; and for some years after her marriage, Cecilia's godmother, who took the opportunity of the wedding to break through many of her recluse habits, used to come and see her every day in a magnificent yellow chariot.

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CINDERELLA

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CINDERELLA.

It is, happily, not only in fairy tales that things sometimes fall out as one could wish, that anxieties are allayed, mistakes explained away, friends reconciled; that people inherit large fortunes, or are found out in their nefarious schemes; that long-lost children are discovered disguised in soot, that vessels come safely sailing into port after the storm; and that young folks who have been faithful to one another are married off at last. Some of these young couples are not only happily married, but they also begin life in pleasant palaces tastefully decorated, and with all the latest improvements; with convenient cupboards, bath-rooms, back staircases, speaking tubes, lifts from one storey to another, hot and cold water laid on; while outside lie well-kept parks, and gardens, and flower-beds; and from the muslin-veiled windows they can see the sheep browsing; the long shadowy grass, deer starting across the sunny glades, swans floating on the rivers, and sailing through the lilies and tall lithe reeds. There are fruit-

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gardens, too, where great purple plums are sunning on the walls, and cucumbers lying asleep among their cool dark leaves. There are glass-houses where heavy dropping bunches of grapes are hanging, so that one need only open one's mouth for them to fall into it all ready cooked and sweetened. Sometimes, in addition to all these good things, the young couple possess all the gracious gifts of youth, beauty, gay and amiable dispositions. Some one said, the other day, that it seemed as if Fate scarcely knew what she was doing, when she lavished with such profusion every gift and delight upon one pair of heads, while others were left bald, shorn, unheeded, dishevelled, forgotten, dishonoured. And yet the world would be almost too sad to bear, if one did not sometimes see happiness somewhere. One would scarcely believe in its possible existence, if there was nobody young, fortunate, prosperous, delighted; nobody to think of with satisfaction, and to envy a little. The sight of great happiness and prosperity is like listening to harmonious music, or looking at beautiful pictures, at certain times of one's life. It seems to suggest possibilities, it sets sad folks longing; but while they are wishing, still, maybe, a little reproachfully, they realise the existence of what perhaps they had doubted before. Fate has been hard to them, but there *is* compensation even in this life, they tell themselves. Which of us know when his turn may come? Happiness is a fact: it does lie within some people's grasp. To this or that young fairy

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couple, age, trial, and trouble may be in store; but now at least the present is golden; the innocent delights and triumphs of youth and nature are theirs.

I could not help moralising a little in this way, when we were staying with young Lulworth and his wife the other day, coming direct from the struggling dull atmosphere of home to the golden placidity of Lulworth farm. They drove us over to Cliffe Court—another oasis, so it seemed to me, in the arid plains of life. Cliffe Court is a charming, cheerful, Italian-looking house, standing on a hill in the midst of a fiery furnace of geraniums and flower-beds. 'It belongs to young Sir Charles Richardson. He is six-and-twenty, and the handsomest man in the county,' said Frank.

'Oh, no, Frank; you are joking, surely,' said Cecilia; and then she stared, and then blushed in her odd way. She still stared sometimes when she was shy, as she used to do before she married.

So much of her former habits Cecilia had also retained, that as the clock struck eight every morning a great punctual breakfast-bell used to ring in the outer hall. The dining-room casement was wide open upon the beds of roses, the tea was made, Cecilia in her crisp white morning dress, and with all her wavy bronze hair curling about her face, was waiting to pour it out, the eggs were boiled, the bacon was frizzling hot upon the plate to a moment; there was no law allowed, not a minute's grace for anybody, no matter how lazy. They had been married

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a little more than two years, and were quite established in their country home. I wish I could perform some incantation like those of my friends the fairies, and conjure up the old farm bodily with a magic wave of my pen, or by drawing a triangle with a circle through it upon the

paper—as the enchanters do. The most remarkable things about the farm were its curious and beautiful old chimneys—indeed the whole county of Sussex is celebrated for them, and the meanest little cottages have noble-looking stacks all ornamented, carved and weather-beaten. There were gables also, and stony mullioned windows, and ancient steps with rusty rings hanging to them, affixed there to fasten the bridles of horses that would have run away several hundred years ago, if this precaution had not been taken. And then there were storehouses and ricks and barns, all piled with the abundance of the harvest. The farmyard was alive with young fowls and cocks and hens; and guinea-hens, those gentle little dowagers, went about glistening in silver and grey, and Cecilia's geese came clamouring to meet her. I can see it all as I think about it. The old walls are all carved and ornamented, sometimes by art and work of man's hand, sometimes by time and lovely little natural mosses. House-leeks grow in clumps upon the thatch, a pretty girl is peeping through a lattice window, a door is open while a rush of sweet morning scent comes through the shining oaken passage

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from the herb-garden and orchard behind. Cows with their soft brown eyes and cautious tread are passing on their way to a field across the road. A white horse waiting by his stable-door shakes his head and whinnies.

Frank and Cecilia took us for a walk after breakfast the first morning we came. We were taken to the stables first and the cow-houses, and then we passed out through a gate into a field, and crossing the field we got into a copse which skirted it, and so by many a lovely little winding path into the woods. Young Lulworth took our delight and admiration as a personal compliment. It was all Lulworth property as far as we could see. I thought it must be strangely delightful to be the possessor of such beautiful hills, mist, sunshine and shadow, violet tones, song of birds, and shimmer of foliage; but Frank, I believe, looked at his future prospects from a material point of view. 'You see it ain't the poetic part of it which pays,' he said. But he appreciated it nevertheless, for Cecilia came out of the woods that morning, all decked out with great convolvulus leaves, changed to gold, which Frank had gathered as we went along and given to her This year all the leaves were turning to such beautiful colours that people remarked upon it, and said they never remembered such a glowing autumn; even the year when Frank came to Dorlicote was not to compare to it. Browns and russet, and bright amber and gold flecks, berries, red leaves, a lovely blaze and glitter in the woods along the

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lanes and beyond the fields and copses. All the hills were melting with lovely colour in the clear warm autumn air, and the little nut-wood paths seemed like Aladdin's wonderful gardens, where precious stones hung to the trees; there was a twinkle and crisp shimmer, yellow leaves and golden light, yellow light and golden leaves, red hawthorn, convolvulus-berries, holly-berries beginning to glow, and heaped-up clustering purple blackberries. The sloe-berries, or snowy blackthorn fruit, with their soft gloom of colour, were over, and this was the last feast of the year. On the trees the apples hung red and bright, the pears seemed ready to drop from their branches and walls, the wheat was stacked, the sky looked violet behind the yellow ricks. A blackbird was singing like a ripple of water, somebody said. It is hard to refrain from writing of all these lovely things, though it almost is an impertinence to attempt to set them down on paper in long lists, like one of Messrs. Rippon and Burton's circulars. As we were walking along the high-road on our way back to the farm, we passed a long pale melancholy-looking man riding a big horse, with a little sweet-faced creature about sixteen who was cantering beside him.

He took off his hat, the little girl kissed her hand as they passed, nodding a gay triumphant nod, and then we watched them down the hill, and disappearing at the end of the lane.

'I am quite glad to see Ella Ashford out riding with

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her father again,' said Lulworth, holding the garden gate open for us to pass in.

'Mrs. Ashford called here a day or two ago with her daughter,' said Cecilia. 'They're going to stay at the Ravenhill, she told me. I thought Colonel Ashford was gone too. I suppose he is come back.'

'Of course he is,' said Frank, 'since we have just seen him with Ella, and of course his wife is away for the same reason.'

'The child has grown very thin,' said H.

'She has a difficult temper,' said Cecilia—who, once she got an idea into her soft, silly head, did not easily get rid of it again. 'She is a great anxiety to poor Mrs. Ashford. She is very different, she tells me, to Julia and Lisette Garnier, her own daughters.'

'I knew them when they were children,' said H. 'We used to see a great deal of Mrs. Ashford when she was first a widow, and I went to her second wedding.'

We were at Paris one year—ten years before the time I am writing of—and Mrs. Garnier lived over us, in a tiny little apartment. She was very poor, and very grandly dressed, and she used to come rustling in to see us. Rustling is hardly the word, she was much too graceful and womanly a person to rustle; her long silk gowns used to ripple, and wave, and flow away as she came and went; and her beautiful eyes used to fill with tears as she drank

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her tea and confided her troubles to us. H. never liked her; but I must confess to a very kindly feeling for the poor, gentle, beautiful, forlorn young creature, so passionately lamenting the loss she had sustained in Major-General Garnier. He had left her very badly off, although she was well connected, and Lady Jane Peppercorne, her cousin, had offered her and her two little girls a home at Ravenhill, she used to tell us in her *eploré* manner. I do not know why she never availed herself of the offer. She said once that she would not be doing justice to her precious little ones, to whom she devoted herself with the assistance of an experienced attendant. My impression is, that the little ones used to scrub one another's little ugly faces, and plait one another's little light Chinese-looking tails, while the experienced attendant laced and dressed and adorned, and scented and powdered their mamma. She really was a beautiful young woman, and would have looked quite charming if she had left herself alone for a single instant, but she was always posing. She had dark bright eyes; she had a lovely little arched mouth; and hands so white, so soft, so covered with rings, that one felt that it was indeed a privilege when she said, 'Oh, *how* do you do?' and extended two or three gentle confiding fingers. At first she went nowhere except to church, and to walk in the retired paths of the Park de Monçeau, although she took in *Galignani* and used to read the lists of arrivals But by degrees she began to—chiefly to

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please me, she said—go out a little, to make a few acquaintances. One day I was walking with her down the Champs Elysées, when she suddenly started and looked up at a tall, melancholy-looking gentleman who was passing, and who stared at her very hard; and soon after that it was that she began telling me she had determined to make an effort for her children's sake, and to go a little more into society. She wanted me to take her to Madame de Girouette's, where she heard I was going one evening, and where she believed she should meet an old friend of hers, whom she particularly wished to see again. Would I help her? Would I be so *very* good? Of course I was ready to do anything I could. She came punctual to her time, all grey moire and black lace; a remise was sent for, and we set off, jogging along the crowded streets, with our two lamps lighted, and a surly man, in a red waistcoat and an oilskin hat, to drive us to the Rue de Lille. All the way there, Mrs. Garnier was strange, silent, nervous, excited. Her eyes were like two shining craters, I thought, when we arrived, and as we climbed up the interminable flights of stairs. I guessed which was the old friend in a minute: a tall, well-looking, sick-looking man with a grey moustache, standing by himself in a corner.

I spent a curious evening, distracted between Madame de Girouette's small talk, to which I was supposed to be listening, and Mrs. Garnier's murmured conversation with

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her old friend in the corner, to which I was vainly endeavouring not to attend.

'My dear, imagine a *bouillon*, surmounted with little tiny flutings all round the bottom, and then three *ruches*, alternating with three little *volants*, with great *choux* at regular intervals; over this a tunic, caught up at the side by a *jardinière*, a *ceinture à la Bébé*.'

'When you left us I was a child, weak, foolish, easily frightened and influenced. It nearly broke my heart. Look me in the face, if you can, and tell me you do not believe me,' I heard Mrs. Garnier murmuring in a low thrilling whisper. She did not mean me to hear it, but she was too absorbed in what she was saying to think of all the people round about her.

'Ah, Lydia, what does it matter now?' the friend answered in a sad voice, which touched me somehow. 'We have both been wrecked in our ventures, and life has not much left for either of us now.'

'It is cut *en biais*,' Madame de Girouette went on; 'the pieces which are taken out at one end are let in at the other: the effect is quite charming, and the economy is immense.'

'For you, you married the person you loved,' Lydia Garnier was answering; 'for me, out of the wreck, I have at least my children, and a remembrance, and a friend—is it so? Ah, Henry, have I not at least a friend?'

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'Everybody wants one,' said Madame de Girouette, concluding her conversation, 'and they cannot be made fast enough to supply the demand. I am promised mine to wear to-morrow at the opening of the salon, but I am afraid that you have no chance. How the poor thing is over-worked—her magazin is crowded—I believe she will leave it all in charge of her première demoiselle, and retire to her campagne as soon as the season is over.'

'And you will come and see me, will you not,' said the widow, as we went away, looking up at her friend. I do not know to this day if she was acting. I believe, to do her justice, that she was only acting what she really felt, as many of us do at times.

I took Mrs. Garnier home as I had agreed. I did not ask any questions. I met Colonel Ashford on the stairs next day, and I was not surprised when, about a week after, Mrs. Garnier flitted into the drawing-room early one morning, and sinking down at my feet in a careless attitude, seized my hand, and said that she had come for counsel, for advice. . . She had had an offer from a person whom she respected, Colonel Ashford, whom I might have remarked that night at Madame de Girouette's; would I—would I give her my candid opinion; for her children's sake, did I not think it would be well to think seriously? . . .

'And for your own, too, my dear,' said I. 'Colonel Ashford is in Parliament, he is very well off. I believe

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you will be making an excellent marriage. Accept him by all means.'

'Dear friend, since this is your real heart-felt opinion, I value your judgment too highly not to act by its dictates. Once, years ago, there was thought of this between me and Henry. I will now confide to you, my heart has never failed from its early devotion. A cruel fate separated us. I married. He married. We are brought together as by a miracle, but our three children will never know the loss of their parents' love,' &c. &c. Glance, hand pressure, &c.—tears, &c. Then a long, soft, irritating kiss. I felt for the first time in my life inclined to box her ears.

The little Garniers certainly gained by the bargain, and the colonel sat down to write home to his little daughter, and tell her the news.

Poor little Ella, I wonder what sort of anxieties Mrs. Ashford had caused to her before she had been Ella's father's wife a year. Miss Ashford made the best of it. She was a cheery, happy little creature, looking at everything from the sunny side, adoring her father, running wild out of doors, but with an odd turn for house-keeping, and order and method at home. Indeed, for the last two years, ever since she was twelve years old, she had kept her father's house. Languid, gentle, easily impressed, Colonel Ashford was quite curiously influenced by this

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little daughter. She could make him come and go, and like and dislike. I think it was Ella who sent him into Parliament: she could not bear Sir Rainham Richardson, their next neighbour, to be an M.P., and an oracle, while her father was only a retired colonel. Her ways and her sayings were a strange and pretty mixture of childishness and precociousness. She would be ordering dinner, seeing that the fires were alight in the study and dining-room, writing notes to save her father trouble (Colonel Ashford hated trouble), in her cramped, crooked, girlish hand; the next minute she was perhaps flying, agile-footed, round and round the old hall, skipping up and down the oak stairs, laughing out like a child as she played with her puppy, and dangled a little ball of string under his black nose. Puff, with a youthful bark, would seize the ball and go scuttling down the corridors with his prize, while Ella pursued him with her quick flying feet. She could sing charmingly, with a clear, true, piping voice, like a bird's, and she used to dance to her own singing in the prettiest way imaginable. Her dancing was really remarkable: she had the most beautiful feet and hands, and as she seesawed in time, still singing and moving in rhythm, anyone seeing her could not fail to have been struck by the weird-like little accomplishment. Some girls have a passion for dancing—boys have a hundred other ways and means of giving vent to their activity and exercising their youthful limbs, and putting out their eager young

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strength; but girls have no such chances; they are condemned to walk through life for the most part quietly, soberly, putting a curb on the life and vitality which is in them. They long to throw it out, they would like to have wings to fly like a bird, and so they dance sometimes with all their hearts, and might, and energy. People rarely talk of the poetry of dancing, but there is something in it of the real inspiration of art. The music plays, the heart beats time, the movements flow as naturally as the branches of a tree go waving in the wind. . . .

One day a naughty boy, who had run away, for a lark, from his tutor and his schoolroom at Cliffe, hard by, and who was hiding in a ditch, happened to see Ella alone in a field. She was looking up at the sky and down at the pretty scarlet and white pimpernels, and listening to the birds; suddenly she felt so strong and so light, and as if she *must* jump about a little, she was so happy; and so she did, shaking her pretty golden mane, waving her poppies high over head, and singing higher and higher, like one of the larks that were floating in mid air. The naughty boy was much frightened, and firmly believed that he had seen a fairy.

'She was all in white,' he said afterwards, in an aggrieved tone of voice. 'She'd no hat, or anything; she bounded six foot into the air. You never saw anything like it.

Master Richardson's guilty conscience had something

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to do with his alarm. When his friend made a few facetious enquiries he answered quite sulkily,—'Black pudden? she offered me no pudden or anything else. I only wish you had been there, that's all, then you'd believe a fellow when he says a thing, instead of always chaffing.'

Ella gave up her dancing after the new wife came to Ash Place. It was all so different; she was not allowed any more to run out into the fields alone. She supposed it was very nice having two young companions like Lisette and Julia, and at first, in her kindly way, the child did the honours of her own home, showed them the way which led to her rabbits, her most secret bird's nest, the old ivy-grown smugglers' hole in the hollow. Lisette and Julia went trotting about in their frill trowsers and Chinese tails of hair, examining everything, making their calculations, saying nothing, taking it all in (poor little Ella was rather puzzled, and could not make them out). Meantime her new mother was gracefully wandering over the house on her husband's arm, and standing in attitudes, admiring the view from the windows, and asking gentle little indifferent questions, to all of which Colonel Ashford replied unsuspectingly enough.

'And so you give the child an allowance? Is she not very young for one? And is this Ella's room? how prettily it is furnished.'

'She did it all herself,' said her father, smiling.

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'Look at her rocking-horse, and her dolls' house, and her tidy little arrangements.'

The house-keeping books were in a little pile on the table; a very suspicious-looking doll was lying on the bed, so were a pile of towels, half marked, but neatly folded; there was a bird singing in a cage, a squirrel, a little aged dog—Puff's grandmother—asleep on a cushion, some sea-anemones in a glass, gaping with their horrid mouths, strings of birds' eggs were suspended, and whips were hanging up on the walls. There was a great bunch of flowers in the window, and a long daisy-chain fastened up in festoons round the glass; and then on the toilette-table there were one or two valuable trinkets set out in their little cases.

'Dear me,' said Mrs. Ashford, 'is it not a pity to leave such temptation in the way of the servants? Little careless thing—had I not better keep them for her, Henry? they are very beautiful.' And Mrs. Ashford softly collected Ella's treasures in her long white hands.

'Ella has some very valuable things,' Colonel Ashford said. 'She keeps them locked up in a strong box, I believe; yes, there it is in the corner.'

'It had much better come into my closet,' Mrs. Ashford said. 'Oh, how heavy! Come here, strong-arm, and help me.' Colonel Ashford obediently took up the box as he was bid.

'And I think I may as well finish marking the

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dusters,' said Mrs. Ashford, looking round the room as she collected them all in her apron. 'The books, of course, are now my duty. I think Ella will not be sorry to be relieved of her cares. Do you know, dear, I think I am glad, for her sake, that you married me, as well as for my own. I think she has had too much put upon her, is a little too decided, too *prononcée* for one so young. One would not wish to see her grow up before the time. Let them remain young and careless while they can, Henry.'

So when Ella came back to mark the dusters that she had been hemming, because Mrs. Milton was in a hurry for them and the housemaid had hurt her eye, they were gone, and so were her neat little books that she had taken such pride in, and had been winding up before she gave them to Mrs. Ashford to keep in future; so was her pretty coral necklace that she wore of an evening; and her pearls with the diamond clasp; and her beautiful clear carbuncle brooch that she was so fond of, and her little gold clasp bracelet. Although Eliza and Susan had lived with them all her life long, *they* had never taken her things, poor Ella thought, a little bitterly. 'Quite unsuitable, at your age, dearest,' Mrs. Ashford murmured, kissing her fondly.

And Ella never got them back any more. Many and many other things there were she never got back, poor child. Ah me! treasures dearer to her than the pretty

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coral necklace and the gold clasp bracelet—liberty, confidence—the tender atmosphere of admiring love in which she had always lived, the first place in her father's heart. That should never be hers again some one had determined.

The only excuse for Mrs. Ashford is that she was very much in love with her husband, and so selfishly attached to him that she grudged the very care and devotion which little Ella had spent upon her father all these years past. Every fresh proof of thought and depth of feeling in such a childish little creature hurt and vexed the other woman. Ella must be taught her place, this lady determined, not in so many words. Alas! if we could always set our evil thoughts and schemes to words, it would perhaps be well with us, and better far than drifting, unconscious and unwarned, into nameless evil, unowned to oneself, scarcely recognised.

And so the years went by. Julia and Lisette grew up into two great tall fashionable bouncing young ladies; they pierced their ears, turned up their pigtails, and dressed very elegantly. Lisette used to wear a coral necklace, Julia was partial to a clear carbuncle brooch her mother gave her. Little Ella, too, grew up like a little green plant springing up through the mild spring rains and the summer sunshine, taller and prettier and sadder every year. And yet perhaps it was as well after all that early in life she had to learn to be content with a very little share of its bounties; she might have been

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spoilt and over-indulged if things had gone on as they began, if nothing had ever thwarted her, and if all her life she had had her own way. She was a bright smiling little thing for all her worries, with a sweet little face; indeed her beauty was so remarkable, and her manner so simple and charming, that Julia and Lisette, who were a year or two her elders, used to complain to their mother nobody ever noticed them when Ella was by. Lady Jane Peppercorne, their own cousin, was always noticing her, and actually gave her a potato off her own plate the other day.

'I fear she is a very forward, designing girl. I shall not think of taking her out in London this year,' Mrs. Ashford said, with some asperity; 'nor shall I allow her to appear at our crôquet party next week. She is far too young to be brought out.'

So Ella was desired to remain in her own room on this occasion. She nearly cried, poor little thing, but what could she do; her father was away, and when he came back Mrs. Ashford would be sure to explain everything to him. Mrs. Ashford had explained life to him in so strangely ingenious a manner that he had got to see it in a very topsy-turvy fashion. Some things she had explained away altogether, some she had distorted and twisted, poor little Ella had been explained and explained, until there was scarcely anything of her left at all. Poor child, she sometimes used to think she had not a single

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friend in the world, but she would chide herself for such fancies; it must be fancy. Her father loved her as much as ever, but he was engrossed by business, and it was not to be expected he should show what he felt before Julia and Lisette, who might be hurt. And then Ella would put all her drawers in order, or ew a seam, or go out and pull up a bedful of weeds to chase such morbid fancies out of her mind.

Lady Jane Peppercorne, of whom mention has been already made, had two houses, one in Onslow Square, another at Hampstead. She was very rich, she had never married, and was consequently far more sentimental than ladies of her standing usually are. She was a flighty old lady, and lived sometimes at one house, sometimes at the other, sometimes at hotels here and there, as the fancy seized her. She was very kind as well as flighty, and was constantly doing generous things, and trying to help anyone who seemed to be in trouble or who appeared to wish for anything she had it in her power to grant.

So when Mrs. Ashford said,—'Oh, Lady Jane, pity me! My husband says he cannot afford to take me to town this year. I should so like to go, for the dear girls' sake of course——' Lady Jane gave a little grunt and said,—'I will lend you my house in Onslow Square, if you like—that is, if you keep my room ready for me in case I want to come up at any time. But I daresay you won't care for such an unfashionable quarter of the world.'

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'Oh, Lady Jane, how exceedingly kind, how very delightful and unexpected!' cried Mrs. Ashford, who had been hoping for it all the time, and who hastened to communicate the news to Lisette and Julia.

'I shall want a regular outfit, mamma,' said Julia, who was fond of dress. 'Perhaps we shall meet young Mr. Richardson in town.'

'I shall be snapped up directly by some one, I expect,' said Lisette, who was very vain, and thought herself irresistible.

'Am I to come too?' asked Ella, timidly, from the other end of the room, looking up from her sewing.

'I do not know,' replied her stepmother, curtly, and Ella sighed a little wistfully, and went on stitching.

'At what age shall you let me come out?' she presently asked, shyly.

'When you are fit to be trusted in the world, and have cured your unruly temper,' said Mrs. Ashford. Ella's eyes filled with tears, and she blushed up; but her father came into the room, and she smiled through her tears, and thought to herself that since her temper was so bad, she had better begin to rule it that very instant. . . . . When Mrs. Ashford began to explain to her husband, however, how much better it would be for Ella to remain in the country, the child's wistful glance met his, and for once he insisted that she should not be left behind.

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It is a bright May morning after a night of rain, and although this is London and not the country any more, Onslow Square looks bright and clean. Lady Jane has had the house smartly done up: clean chintz, striped blinds, a balcony full of mignonette. She has kept two little rooms for herself and her maid, but all the rest of the house is at the Ashfords' disposal. Everybody is satisfied, and Ella is enchanted with her little room upstairs. Mrs. Ashford is making lists of visits and dinner-parties and milliners' addresses; Lisette is looking out of window at some carriages which are passing; the children and nurses are sitting under the trees in the square; Julia is looking at herself in the glass and practising her court curtseys; and Ella is in the back room arranging a great heap of books in a bookcase. 'I should so like to go to the Palace, mamma,' she says, looking up with a smudgy face, for the books were all dirty and covered with dust. 'Do you think there will be room for me?'

Ella had no proper pride, as it is called, and always used to take it for granted she was wanted, and that some accident prevented her from going with the others. 'I am sorry there is no room for you, Ella,' said Mrs. Ashford, in her deep voice; 'I have asked Mr. Richardson to come with us, and if he fails, I promised to call for the Countess Bricabrac. Pray, if you do not care for walking in the square this afternoon, see that my maid puts my things properly away in the cupboards, as well as Julia's and

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Lisette's, and help her to fold the dresses, because it is impossible for one person to manage these long trains unassisted.'

'Very well,' said Ella, cheerfully. 'I hope you will have a pleasant day. How nice it must be to be going.'

'I wish you would learn not to wish for everything and anything that you happen to hear about, Ella,' said Mrs. Ashford. 'And, by the way, if you find any visitors coming, go away, for I cannot allow you to be seen in this dirty state.'

'There's a ring,' said Ella, gathering some of the books together. 'Good-bye.'

Young Mr. Richardson, who was announced immediately after, passed a pretty maid-servant, carrying a great pile of folios, upon the stairs. She looked so little fitted for the task that he involuntarily stopped and said, 'Can I assist you?' The little maid smiled and shook her head, without speaking. 'What a charming little creature!' thought Mr. Richardson. He came to say that he and his friend, Jack Prettyman, were going to ride down together, and would join the ladies at the Palace.

'We are to pick Colonel Ashford up at his club,' Mrs. Ashford said, 'and Madame de Bricabrac. I shall count upon you then.' And the young ladies waved him gracious *au revoirs* from the balcony.

'Oh! don't you like white waistcoats, Julia?' said Lisette, as she watched him down the street.

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They are gone. Ella went up to help with the dresses, but presently the maid said in her rude way that she must go down to dinner, and she could not have anybody messing the things about while she was away. Carter hated having a 'spy' set over her, as she called Miss Ashford. The poor little spy went back to the drawing-room. She was too melancholy and out of spirits to dress herself and go out. Her face was still smudgy, and she had cried a little over Lisette's pink tarlatane. Her heart sank down, down, down. She did so long for a little fun and delight, and laughter and happiness. She knew her father would say, 'Where is Ella?' and her mother would answer, 'Oh, I really cannot account for Ella's fancies. She was sulky this morning again. I cannot manage her strange tempers.'

The poor child chanced to see her shabby face and frock and tear-stained cheeks in one of the tall glasses over the gilt tables. It was very silly, but the woe-begone little face touched her so; she was so sorry for it that all of a sudden she burst out sob, sob, sob, crying. 'Oh, how nice it must be to be loved and cherished, and very happy,' she thought. 'Oh, I could be so good if they would only love me.' She could not bear to think more directly of her father's change of feeling. She sat down on the floor, as she had a way of doing, all in a little heap, staring at the empty grate. The fire had burnt out, and no one had thought of relighting it. For a few minutes

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her tears overflowed, and she cried and cried in two rivulets down her black little face. She thought how forlorn she was, what a dull life she led, how alone she lived—such a rush of regret and misery overpowered her, that she hid her face in her hands, unconscious of anything else but her own sadness. . . .

She did not hear the bell ring, nor a carriage stop, nor Lady Jane's footsteps. That lady came across the room and stood looking at her. 'Why, my dear little creature, what is the matter?' said Lady Jane at last. 'Crying? don't you know it is very naughty to cry, no matter how bad things are? Are they all gone—are you all alone?'

Ella jumped up quite startled, blushed, wiped her tears in a smudge. 'I thought nobody would see me cry,' she said, 'for they are all gone to the Crystal Palace.'

'And did they leave you behind quite by yourself?' the old lady asked.

'They were so sorry they had no room for me,' said good-natured little Ella. She could not bear to hear people blamed. 'They had promised Madame de Brica-brac.'

'Is that all?' said Lady Jane, in her kind imperious way. 'Why, I have driven in from Hampstead on purpose to go there too. There's a great flower-show to-day; and you know I am a first-rate gardener. I've brought up a great hamper of things. Put on your bonnet, wash your face, and come along directly. I've plenty of room. Who

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is that talking in that rude way?' for at that instant Carter called out with a sniff from the drawing-room door, without looking in,—

'Now then, Miss Ella, you can come and help me fold them dresses. I'm in a nurry.'

Carter was much discomposed when, instead of her victim, Lady Jane appeared, irate, dignified.

'Go upstairs directly, and do not forget yourself again,' said the old lady.

'Oh, I think I ought to go and fold up the dresses,' said Ella, hesitating, flushing, blushing, and looking more than grateful. 'How very very kind of you to think of me. I'm afraid they wouldn't—I'm afraid I've no bonnet. Oh, thank you, I—but——'

'Nonsense, child,' said Lady Jane; 'my maid shall help that woman. Here,' ringing the bell violently, to the footman, 'what have you done with the hamper I brought up? let me see it unpacked here immediately. Can't trust those people, my dear—always see to everything myself'

All sorts of delicious things, scents, colours, spring-flowers and vegetables came out of the hamper in delightful confusion. It was a hamper full of treasures — sweet, bright, delicious-tasted — asparagus, daffodillies, blue-bells, salads, cauliflowers, hot-house flowers, cowslips from the fields, azalias. Ella's natty little fingers arranged them all about the room in plates and in

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vases so perfectly and so quickly, that old Lady Jane cried out in admiration,—

'Why, you would be a first-rate girl, if you didn't cry. Here, you John, get some bowls and trays for the vegetables, green pease, strawberries; and oh, here's a cucumber and a nice little early pumpkin. I had it forced, my dear. Your stepmother tells me she is passionately fond of pumpkins. Here, John, take all this down to the cook; tell her to put it in a cool larder, and order the carriage and horses round directly. Now then,' to Ella, briskly, 'go and put your things on, and come along with me. *I'll* make matters straight. I always do. There, go directly. I can't have the horses kept. Raton, my coachman, is terrible if he is kept waiting—frightens me to death by his driving when he is put out.'

Ella did not hesitate a moment longer; she rushed upstairs; her little feet flew as they used to do formerly. She came down in a minute, panting, rapturous, with shining hair and a bright face, in her very best Sunday frock, cloak, and hat. Shabby enough they were, but she was too happy, too excited, to think about the deficiencies in her toilet.

'Dear me, this will never do, I see,' said the old lady, looking at her disapprovingly; but she smiled so kindly as she spoke, that Ella was not a bit frightened.

'Indeed, I have no other,' she said.

'John,' cried the old lady, 'where is my maid? Desire

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her to come and speak to me directly. Now then, sir!'

All her servants knew her ways much too well not to fly at her commands. A maid appeared as if by magic.

'Now, Batter, be quick; get that blue and silver bournous of mine from the box upstairs—it will look very nice; and a pair of grey kid gloves, Batter; and let me see, my dear, you wouldn't look well in a brocade. No, that grey satin skirt, Batter; her own white bodice will do, and we can buy a bonnet as we go along. Now, quick; am I to be kept waiting all day?'

Ella in a moment found herself transformed somehow into the most magnificent lady she had seen for many a day. It was like a dream, she could hardly believe it; she saw herself move majestically, sweeping in silken robes across the very same pier-glass, where a few minutes before she had looked at the wretched little melancholy creature, crying with a dirty face, and watched the sad tears flowing. . . .

'Now then—now then,' cried Lady Jane, who was always saying 'Now then,' and urging people on—'where's my page—are the outriders there? They are all workhouse boys, my dear; they came to me as thin and starved as church mice, and then I fatten them up and get 'em situations. I always go with outriders. One's obliged to keep up a certain dignity in these Chartist days—universal reform—suffrage—vote by ballot. I've no patience with

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Mr. Gladstone, and it all rests with us to keep ourselves well aloof. Get in, get in! Drive to Sydenham, if you please.'

Lady Jane's manners entirely changed when she spoke to Raton. And it is a fact that coachmen from their tall boxes rule with a very high hand, and most ladies tremble before them. Raton looked very alarming in his wig, with his shoebuckles and great red face.

What a fairy tale it was! There was little Ella sitting in this lovely chariot, galloping down the Brompton Road, with all the little boys cheering and hurrahing; and the little outriders clattering on ahead, and the old lady sitting bolt upright as pleased as Punch. She really *had* been going to Sydenham; but I think if she had not, she would have set off instantly, if she thought she would make anybody happy by so doing. They stopped at a shop in the Brompton Road—the wondering shop-woman came out.

'A white bonnet, if you please,' said Lady Jane. 'That will do very well. Here, child, put it on, and mind you don't crease the strings.' And then away and away they went once more through the town, the squares, over the bridges. They saw the ships and steamers coming down the silver Thames, but the carriage never stopped: the outriders paid the tolls and clattered on ahead. They rolled along pleasant country lanes and fields, villas and country houses, road-side inns, and pedestrians, and

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crawling carts and carriages. At the end of three-quarters of an hour, during which it seemed to Ella as if the whole gay *cortége* had been flying through the air, they suddenly stopped at last, at the great gates of a Crystal Palace blazing in the sun, and standing on a hill. A crowd was looking on. All sorts of grand people were driving up in their carriages; splendid ladies were passing in. Two gentlemen in white waistcoats were dismounting from their horses just as Ella and Lady Jane were arriving. They rushed up to the carriage-door, and helped them to the ground.

'And pray, sir, who are you?' said Lady Jane, as soon as she was safely deposited on her two little flat feet with the funny old-fashioned shoes.

The young man coloured up and bowed. 'You don't remember me, Lady Jane,' he said. 'Charles Richardson—I have had the honour of meeting you at Ash Place, and at Cliffe, my uncle's house. This is my friend Mr. Prettyman.'

'This is Mr. Richardson, my dear Ella, and that is Mr. Prettyman. Tell them to come back in a couple of hours' (to the page), 'and desire Raton to see that the horses have a feed. Now then—yes—give her your arm, and you are going to take me?—very well,' to the other white waistcoat; and so they went into the Palace.

What are young princes like now-a-days? Do they wear diamond aigrettes, swords at their sides, topboots,

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and little short cloaks over one shoulder? The only approach to romance that I can see, is the flower in their button-hole, and the nice little moustaches and curly beards in which they delight. But all the same, besides the flower in the button, there is also, I think, a possible flower of sentiment still growing in the soft hearts of princes in these days, as in the old days long, long ago.

Charles Richardson was a short ugly little man, very gentlemanlike, and well dressed. He was the next heir to a baronetcy; he had a pale face and a snub nose, and such a fine estate in prospect—Cliffe Court its name was—that I do not wonder at Miss Lisette's admiration for him. As for Ella, she though how kind he had been on the stairs that morning; she thought what a bright genial smile he had. How charming he looked, she said to herself; no, never, never had she dreamt of anyone so nice. She was quite—more than satisfied, no prince in romance would have seemed to her what this one was, there actually walking beside her. As for Richardson himself, it was a case of love at first sight. He had seen many thousand young ladies in the last few years, but not one of them to compare with this sweet-faced, ingenuous, tender, bright little creature. He offered her his arm, and led her along.

Ella observed that he said a few words to his friend: she little guessed their purport. 'You go first,' he whispered, 'and if you see the Ashfords get out of the way. I should have to walk with those girls, and my heart

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is here transfixed for ever.' . . . 'Where have I seen you before?' he went on, talking to Ella, as they roamed through the beautiful courts and gardens, among fountains and flowers, and rare objects of art. 'Forgive me for asking you, but I must have met you somewhere long ago, and have never forgotten you. I am haunted by your face.' Ella was too much ashamed to tell him where and how it was they had met that very morning. She remembered him perfectly, but she thought he would rush away and leave her, if she told him that the untidy little scrub upon the stairs had been herself. And she was so happy: music playing, flowers blooming, the great wonderful fairy Palace flashing overhead; the kind, clever, delightful young man to escort her; the gay company, the glitter, the perfume, the statues, the interesting figures of Indians, the dear, dear, kind Lady Jane to look to for sympathy and for good-humoured little nods of encouragement. She had *never* been so happy; she had never known what a wonder the Palace might be. Her heart was so full. It was all so lovely, so inconceivably beautiful and delightful, that she was nearly tipsy with delight; her head turned for an instant, and she clung to young Richardson's protecting arm.

'Are you faint—are you ill?' he said anxiously.

'Oh, no!' said Ella, 'it's only that everything is so beautiful; it is almost more than I can bear. I—I am not often so happy; oh, it is so charming! I do not think

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anything could be so delightful in all the world.' She looked herself so charming and unconscious as she spoke, looking up with her beautiful face out of her white bonnet, that the young fellow felt as if he *must* propose to her, then and there, off-hand on the very spot; and at the instant he looked up passionately—O horror!—he caught sight of the Ashfords, mother, daughters, Madame de Bricabrac, all in a row, coming right down upon them.

'Prettyman, this way to the right,' cried little Richardson, desperately; and Prettyman, who was a good-natured fellow, said, 'This way, please, Lady Jane; there's some people we want to avoid over there.'

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'I'm *sure* it was,' Lisette said. 'I knew the colour of his waistcoat. Who could he have been walking with, I wonder?'

'Some lady of rank, evidently,' said Julia. 'I think they went up into the gallery in search of us.'

'Let us go into the gallery, dears,' said Mrs. Ashford, and away they trudged.

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The young men and their companions had gone into the Tropics, and meanwhile were sitting under a spreading palm-tree, eating pink ices; while the music played and played more delightfully, and all the air was full of flowers and waltzes, of delight, of sentiment. To young Richardson the whole Palace was Ella in everything, in

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every sound, and flower and fountain; to Ella, young Richardson seemed an enormous giant, and his kind little twinkling eyes were shining all round her.

Poor dear! she was so little used to being happy, her happiness almost overpowered her.

'Are you going to the ball at Guildhall to-morrow?' Mr. Richardson was saying to his unknown princess. 'How shall I ever meet you again? will you not tell me your name? But——'

'I wonder what o'clock it is, and where your mother can be, Ella,' said Lady Jane; 'it's very odd we have not met.'

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'I can't imagine where they can have hid themselves,' said Julia, very crossly, from the gallery overhead.

'I'm so tired, and I'm ready to drop,' said Miss Lisette.

'Oh, let us sit,' groaned Madame de Bricabrac. 'I can walk no more; what does it matter if we do not find your friends?'

'If we take our places at the door,' said Lisette, 'we shall be sure to catch them as they pass.'

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'Perhaps I may be able to go to the ball,' said the princess, doubtfully. 'I—I don't know.' Lady Jane made believe not to be listening. The voices in the gallery passed on. Lady Jane having finished her ice, pulled out her little watch, and gave a scream of terror.

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'Heavens! my time is up,' she said. 'Raton will frighten me out of my wits, driving home. Come, child, come—come—come. Make haste—thank these gentlemen for their escort,' and she went skurrying along, a funny little active figure, followed by the breathless young people. They got to the door at last, where Raton was waiting, looking very ferocious. 'Oh, good-by,' said Ella. 'Thank you so much,' as Richardson helped her into the chariot.

'And you will not forget me?' he said in a low voice. 'I shall not need any name to remember you by.'

'My name is Ella,' she answered, blushing, and driving off; and then Ella flung her arms round Lady Jane, and began to cry again, and said, 'Oh, I have been so happy! so happy! How good, good of you to make me so happy! Oh, thank you, dear Lady Jane!'

The others came back an hour after them, looking extremely cross, and were much surprised to find Lady Jane in the drawing-room. 'I am not going back till Wednesday,' said the old lady. 'I've several things to do in town. . . . . Well, have you had a pleasant day?'

'Not at all,' said Mrs. Ashford, plaintively. 'The colonel deserted us; we didn't find our young men till just as we were coming away. We are all very tired, and want some supper—some of your delicious fruit, Lady Jane.'

'Oh, dear, how tired I am!' said Julia.

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'Poor Richardson was in very bad spirits,' said Lisette.

'What a place it is for losing one another,' said old Lady Jane. 'I took Ella there this afternoon, and though I looked about I couldn't see you anywhere.'

'*Ella!*' cried the other girls, astonished; 'was *she* there?' . . . But they were too much afraid of Lady Jane to object more openly.

That evening, after the others left the room, as Ella was pouring out the tea, she summoned up courage to ask whether she might go to the ball at Guildhall with the others next evening. 'Pray, pray, please take me,' she implored. Mrs. Ashford looked up amazed at her audacity.

Poor little Ella! refused, scorned, snubbed, wounded, pained, and disappointed. She finished pouring out the tea in silence, while a few bitter scalding tears dropped from her eyes into the teacups. Colonel Ashford drank some of them, and asked for more sugar to put into his cup.

'There, never mind,' he said, kindly. He felt vexed with his wife, and sorry for the child; but he was, as usual, too weak to interfere. 'You know you are too young to go into the world, Ella. When your sisters are married, then *your* turn will come.'

Alas! would it ever come? The day's delight had given her a longing for more; and now she felt the beau-

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tiful vision was only a vision, and over already: the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palace; and the charming prince himself—was he a vision too? Ah! it was too sad to think of. Presently Lisette and Julia came back: they had been upstairs to see about their dresses.

'I shall wear my bird-of-paradise, and my yellow tarlatane,' said Lisette: 'gold and purple is such a lovely contrast.'

'Gobert has sent me a lovely thing,' said Julia; 'tri-colour flounces all the way up—she has so much taste.'

Good old Lady Jane asked her maid next morning if any dress was being got ready for Miss Ella. Hearing that she was not going, and that no preparations were being made, she despatched Batter on a secret mission, and ordered her carriage at nine o'clock that evening. She went out herself soon after breakfast in a hired brougham, dispensing with the outriders for once. Ella was hard at work all day for her sisters: her little fingers quilled, fluted, frilled, pleated, pinned, tacked the trimmings on their dresses more dexterously than any dressmaker or maid-servant could do. She looked so pretty, so kind, and so tired, so wistful, as she came to help them to dress, that Lisette was quite touched, and said,—'Well, Ella, I shouldn't wonder if, after I am snapped up, you

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were to get hold of a husband some day, I daresay *some* people might think you nice-looking.'

'Oh, do you think so really, Lisette?' said Ella, quite pleased; and then faltering, 'Do you think . . . Shall you see Mr. Richardson?'

'Of course I shall,' said Lisette. 'He was talking great nonsense yesterday after we found him; saying that he had met with perfection at last—very devoted altogether; scarcely spoke to me at all; but that is the greatest proof of devotion, you know. I know what he meant very well. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he was to propose to-night. I don't know whether I shall have him. I'm always afraid of being thrown away,' said Lisette, looking over her shoulder at her train.

Ella longed to send a message, a greeting of some sort, to Lisette's adorer. Oh, how she envied her; what would she not have given to be going too? . . .

'What! are not you dressing, child?' said Lady Jane, coming into the room. 'Are they again obliged to call for Madame de Bricabrac? I had looked up a pair of shoebuckles for you in case you went; but keep them all the same, they only want a little rubbing up.'

'Oh, thank you; how pretty they are; how kind you are to me,' said Ella, sadly. 'I—I am not going.' And she gulped down a great sob.

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It was just dreadful not to go, the poor child had had a great draught of delight the day before, and she was aching and sickening for more, and longing with a passion of longing which is only known to very young people —she looked quite worn and pale, though she was struggling with her tears.

'Rub up your shoebuckles—that will distract you, said the old lady kindly. 'They are worth a great deal of money, though they are only paste; and if you peep in my room you will find a little pair of slippers to wear them with. I hope they will fit. I could hardly get any small enough for you.' They were the loveliest little white satin slippers, with satin heels, all embroidered with glass beads; but small as they were, they were a little loose, only Ella took care not to say so, as she tried them on.

We all know what is coming, though little Ella had no idea of it. The ball was at Guildhall, one of the grandest and gayest that ever was given in the city of London. It was in honour of the beautiful young Princess, who had just landed on our shores. Princes, ambassadors, nobles, stars, orders and garters, and decorations, were to be present; all the grandest, gayest, richest, happiest people in the country, all the most beautiful ladies and jewels and flowers, were to be there to do homage to the peerless young bride. The Ashfords had no sooner started, than Lady Jane, who had been very mysterious all

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day, and never told anyone that she had been to the city to procure two enormous golden tickets, which were up in her bedroom, now came, smiling very benevolently, into the drawing-room. Little Ella was standing out in the balcony with her pale face, and all her hair tumbling down her back. She had been too busy to put it up, and now she was only thinking of the ball, and picturing the dear little ugly disappointed face of Prince Richardson, when he should look about everywhere for her in vain—while she was standing hopelessly gazing after the receding carriage.

'Well, my dear, have you rubbed up the shoe-buckles? That is right,' said the old lady. 'Now come quick into my room and see some of my conjuring.'

Conjuring! It was the most beautiful white net dress, frothed and frothed up to the waist, and looped up with long grasses. The conjuring was her own dear old pearl necklace with the diamond clasp, and a diamond star for her hair. It was a bunch of grasses and delicate white azalias for a headdress, and over all the froth a great veil of flowing white net. The child opened her violet eyes, gasped, screamed, and began dancing about the room like a mad thing, jumping, bounding, clapping her hands, all so softly and gaily, and yet so lightly, in such an ecstasy of delight, that Lady Jane felt she was more than rewarded.

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'Ah! there she is at last!' cried Mr. Richardson, who was turning carefully round and round with the energetic Lisette.

'What do you mean?' said Lisette.

Can you fancy her amazement when she looked round and saw Ella appearing in her snow and sun-light dress, looking so beautiful that everyone turned to wonder at her, and to admire? As for Ella, she saw no one, nothing; she was looking up and down, and right and left, for the kind little pale plain face which she wanted.

'Excuse me one minute, Miss Lisette,' said Mr. Richardson, leaving poor Lisette planted in the middle of the room, and rushing forward.

'Are you engaged,' Ella heard a breathless voice saying in her ear, 'for the next three, six, twenty dances? I am so delighted you have come! I thought you were never coming.'

Julia had no partner at all, and was standing close by the entrance with her mother. They were both astounded at the apparition. Mrs. Ashford came forward to make sure that her eyes were not deceiving her. Could it be—? yes—no,—yes, it was Ella! She flicked her fan indignantly into an alderman's eye, and looked so fierce that the child began to tremble.

'Please forgive me, mamma,' said Ella, piteously.

'Forgive you! never,' said Mrs. Ashford, indignant. 'What does all this mean, pray?' she continued. 'Lady

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Jane, I really must ——' and then she stopped, partly because she was so angry she could scarcely speak, and partly because she could not afford to quarrel with Lady Jane until the season was over.

'You really *must* forgive me, dear Lydia,' said Lady Jane. 'She wanted to come so much, I could not resist bringing her.'

Weber's inspiriting Last Waltz was being played; the people and music went waving to and fro like the waves of the sea, sudden sharp notes of exceeding sweetness sounded, and at the sound the figures all swayed in harmony. The feet kept unseen measure to the music; the harmonious rhythm thrilled and controlled them all. The music was like an enchantment, which kept them moving and swaying in circles and in delightful subjection. Lassitude, sadness, disappointment, Ella's alarm, all melted away for the time; pulses beat, and the dancers seesawed to the measure.

All that evening young Richardson danced with Ella and with no one else: they scarcely knew how the time went. It was a fairy world: they were flying and swimming in melody—the fairy hours went by to music, in light, in delightful companionship. Ella did not care for Mrs. Ashford's darkening looks, for anything that might happen: she was so happy in the moment, she almost forgot to look for Lady Jane's sympathetic glance.

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'You must meet me in the ladies' cloak-room punctually at half-past eleven,' her patroness had whispered to her. 'I cannot keep Raton, with his bad cough, out after twelve o'clock. Mind you are punctual, for I have promised not to keep him waiting.'

'Yes, yes, dear Lady Jane,' said Ella, and away she danced again to the music. And time went on, and Julia had no partners; and Colonel Ashford came up to his wife, saying,—'I'm so glad you arranged for Ella too,' he said. 'How nice she is looking. What is the matter with Julia; why don't she dance?' Tumty, tumty, tumty, went the instruments. And meanwhile Mr. Richardson was saying,—'Your dancing puts me in mind of a fairy I once saw in a field at Cliffe long ago. Nobody would ever believe me, but I did see one.'

'A fairy—what was she like?' asked Ella.

'She was very like you,' said Mr. Richardson, laughing. 'I do believe it *was* you, and that was the time when I saw you before.'

'No, it was not,' said Ella, blushing, and feeling she ought to confess. 'I will tell you,' she said, 'if you will promise to dance *one* more dance with me, after you know.—Only one.'

'Then you, too, remember,' he cried, eagerly. 'One more dance?—twenty—for ever and ever. Ah, you must know, you must guess the feeling in my heart. . . .'

'Listen first,' said Ella, trembling very much and

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waltzing on very slowly. 'It was only the other day—.' The clock struck three-quarters.

'Ella, I am going,' said Lady Jane, tapping her on the shoulder. 'Come along, my dear——.'

'One word!' cried Richardson, eagerly.

'You can stay with your mother if you like,' the old lady went on, preoccupied—she was thinking of her coachman's ire—'but I advise you to come with me.'

'Oh, pray, pray stay!' said young Richardson; 'where is your mother? Let me go and ask her?'

'You had better go yourself, Ella,' said old Lady Jane. 'Will you give me your arm to the door, Mr. Richardson?'

Ella went up to Mrs. Ashford—she was bold with happiness to-night, and made her request. 'Stay with me? certainly not, it is quite out of the question. You do me great honour,' said the lady, laughing sarcastically. 'Lady Jane brought you, Lady Jane must take you back,' said the stepmother. 'Follow your chaperone if you please, I have no room for you in my brougham. Go directly, Miss!' said Mrs. Ashford, so savagely that the poor child was quite frightened, and set off running after the other two. She would have caught them up, but at that instant Lisette—who had at last secured a partner—came waltzing up in such a violent, angry way, that she bumped right up against the little flying maiden and nearly knocked her down. Ella gave a low cry of pain: they had trodden on her foot roughly—they had wounded

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her; her little satin slipper had come off. Poor Ella stooped and tried to pull at the slipper, but other couples came surging up, and she was alone, and frightened, and obliged to shuffle a little way out of the crowd before she could get it on. The poor little frightened thing thought she never should get through the crowd. She made the best of her way to the cloak-room: it seemed to her as if she had been hours getting there. At last she reached it, only to see, to her dismay, as she went in at one door the other two going out of another a long way off. She called, but they did not hear her, and at the same moment St. Paul's great clock began slowly to strike twelve. 'My cloak, my cloak, anything, please,' she cried in great agitation and anxiety; and a stupid, bewildered maid hastily threw a shabby old shawl over her shoulders—it belonged to some assistant in the place. Little Ella, more and more frightened, pulled it up as she hurried along the blocked passages and corridors, all lined with red and thronged with people. They all stared at her in surprise as she flew along. Presently her net tunic caught in a doorway and tore into a long ragged shred which trailed after her. In her agitation her comb fell out of her hair—she looked all scared and frightened—nobody would have recognised the beautiful triumphal princess of half an hour before. She heard the linkmen calling, 'Peppercorne's carriage stops the way!' and she hurried faster and faster down the endless passages and steps, and at last, just as she got

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to the doorway—O horror! she saw the carriage and outriders going gleaming off in the moonlight, while every thing else looked black, dark, and terrible.

'Stop, stop, please stop!' cried little Ella, rushing out into the street through the amazed footmen and linkmen. 'Stop! stop!' she cried, flying past Richardson himself, who could hardly believe his eyes. Raton only whipped his horses, and Ella saw them disappearing into gloom in the distance in a sort of agony of despair. She was excited beyond measure, and exaggerated all her feelings. What was to be done? Go back?—that was impossible; walk home?—she did not know her way. Was it fancy?—was not somebody following her? She felt quite desperate in the moonlight and darkness. At that instant it seemed to her like a fairy chariot coming to her rescue, when a cabman, who was slowly passing, stopped and said, 'Cab, mum?'

'Yes! oh, yes! To Onslow Square,' cried Ella, jumping in and shutting the door in delight and relief. She drove off just as the bewildered little Richardson, who had followed her, reached the spot. He came up in time only to see the cab drive off, and to pick up something which was lying shining on the pavement. It was one of the diamond buckles which had fallen from her shoe as she jumped in. This little diamond buckle might, perhaps, have led to her identification if young Richardson had not

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taken the precaution of ascertaining from old Lady Jane Ella's name and address.

He sent a servant next morning with a little parcel and a note to enquire whether one of the ladies had lost what was enclosed, and whether Colonel Ashford would see him at one o'clock on business.

'Dear me, what a pretty little buckle!' said Lisette, trying it, on her large flat foot. 'It looks very nice, don't it, Julia? I think I guess—don't you?—what he is coming for. I shall say "No."'

'It's too small for you. It would do better for me,' said Julia, contemplating her own long slipper, embellished with the diamonds. 'It is not ours. We must send it back, I suppose.'

'A shoebuckle?' said Ella, coming in from the kitchen, where she had been superintending preserves in her little brown frock. 'Let me see it. Oh, how glad I am; it is mine. Look here!' and she pulled the fellow out of her pocket. 'Lady Jane gave them to me.'

And so the prince arrived before luncheon, and was closeted with Colonel Ashford, who gladly gave his consent to what he wanted. And when Mrs. Ashford began to explain things to him, as was her way, he did not listen to a single word she said. He was so absorbed wondering when Ella was coming into the room. He thought once he heard a little rustle on the stairs outside, and he jumped up and rushed to the door. It was Ella, sure

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enough, in her shabby little gown. Then he knew where and when he had seen her before.

'Ella, why did you run away from me last night?' he aid. 'You see I have followed you after all.'

They were so good, so happy, so devoted to one another that even Lisette and Julia relented. Dear little couple; good luck go with them, happiness, content and plenty. There was something quite touching in their youth, tenderness, and simplicity; and as they drove off in their carriage for the honey-moon, Lady Jane flung the very identical satin slipper after them which Ella should have lost at the ball.

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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

I.

Fairy times, gifts, music and dances are said to be over, or, as it has been said, they come to us so disguised and made familiar by habit that they do not seem to us strange. H. and I, on either side of the hearth, these long past winter evenings could sit without fear of fiery dwarfs skipping out of the ashes, of black puddings coming down the chimney to molest us. The clock ticked, the window-pane rattled. It was only the wind. The hearth-brush remained motionless on its hook. Pussy dozing on the hearth, with her claws quietly opening to the warmth of the blaze, purred on and never once startled us out of our usual placidity by addressing us in human tones. The children sleeping peacefully upstairs were not suddenly whisked away and changelings deposited in their cribs. If H. or I opened our mouths pearls and diamonds did not drop out of them, but neither did frogs and tadpoles

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fall from between our lips. The looking-glass tranquilly reflecting the comfortable little sitting-room, and the stiff ends of H.'s cap-ribbons, spared us visions of wreathing clouds parting to reveal distant scenes of horror and treachery. Poor H.! I am not sure but that she would have gladly looked in a mirror in which she could have sometimes seen the images of those she loved; but our chimney-glass, with its gilt moulding and bright polished surface, reflects only such homely scenes as two old women at work by the fire, some little Indian children at play upon the rug, the door opening and Susan bringing in the tea-things. As for wishing-cloths and little boiling pots, and such like, we have discovered that instead of rubbing lamps, or spreading magic tablecloths upon the floor, we have but to ring an invisible bell (which is even less trouble), and a smiling genius in a white cap and apron brings in anything we happen to fancy. When the clock strikes twelve, H. puts up her work and lights her candle; she has not yet been transformed into a beautiful princess all twinkling with jewels, neither does a scullion ever stand before me in rags; she does not murmur farewell for ever and melt through the key-hole, but 'Good-night,' as she closes the door. One night at twelve o'clock, just after she had left me, there was indeed a loud orthodox ring at the bell, which startled us both a little; H. came running down again without her cap, Susan appeared in great alarm from the kitchen. 'It

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is the back-door bell, ma'am,' said the girl, who had been sitting up over her new Sunday gown, but who was too frightened to see who was ringing.

I may as well explain that our little house is in a street, but that our back windows have the advantage of overlooking the grounds of the villa belonging to our good neighbour and friend Mr. Griffiths in Castle Gardens, and that a door opens out of our little back garden into his big one, of which we are allowed to keep the key. This door had been a postern-gate once upon a time, for a bit of the old wall of the park is still standing, against which our succeeding bricks have been piled. It was a fortunate chance for us when our old ivy-tree died and we found the quaint little doorway behind it. Old Mr. Griffiths was alive then, and when I told him of my discovery, he good-naturedly cleared the way on his side, and so the oak turned once more upon its rusty hinges to let the children pass through, and the nursemaid, instead of pages and secret emissaries and men-at-arms; and about three times a year young Mr. Griffiths stoops under the arch on his way to call upon us. I say young Mr. Griffiths, but I suppose he is over thirty now, for it is more than ten years since his father died.

When I opened the door, in a burst of wind and wet, I found that it was Guy Griffiths who stood outside bare-headed in the rain, ringing the bell that winter night. 'Are you up?' he said. 'For heaven's sake come to my

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mother, she's fainted; her maid is away; the doctor doesn't come. I thought you might know what to do.' And then he led the way through the dark garden, hurrying along before me.

Poor lady, when I saw her I knew that it was no fainting fit, but a paralytic stroke, from which she might perhaps recover in time; I could not tell. For the present there was little to be done: the maids were young and frightened; poor Guy wanted some word of sympathy and encouragement. So far I was able to be of use. We got her to bed and took off her finery;—she had been out at a dinner-party, and had been stricken on her return home,—Guy had discovered her speechless in the library. The poor fellow, frightened and overcome, waited about, trying to be of help, but he was so nervous that he tumbled over us all, and knocked over the chairs and bottles in his anxiety, and was of worse than no use. His kind old shaggy face looked pale, and his brown eyes *ringed* with anxiousness. I was touched by the young fellow's concern, for Mrs. Griffiths had not been a tender mother to him. How she had snapped and laughed at him, and frightened him with her quick sarcastic tongue and hard unmotherlike ways. I wondered if she thought of this as she lay there cold, rigid, watching us with glassy senseless eyes.

The payments and debts and returns of affection are at all times hard to reckon. Some people pay a whole treasury of love in return for a stone, others deal out their

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affection at interest, others again take everything, to the uttermost farthing, and cast it into the ditch and go their way and leave their benefactor penniless and a beggar. Guy himself, hard-headed as he was, and keen over his ledgers in Moorgate Street, could not have calculated such sums as these. All that she had had to give, all the best part of her shallow store, poor Julia Griffiths had paid to her husband, who did not love her: to her second son, whose whole life was a sorrow to his parents. When he died she could never forgive poor Guy for living still, for being his father's friend and right hand, and sole successor. She had been a real mother to Hugh, who was gone; to Guy, who was alive still and patiently waiting to do her bidding, she had shown herself only a stepdame; and yet I am sure no life-devoted parent could have been more anxiously watched and tended by her son. Perhaps—how shall I say what I mean?—if he had loved her more and been more entirely one with her now, his dismay would have been less, his power greater to bear her pain, to look on at her struggling agony of impotence. Even pain does not come between the love of people who really love.

The doctor came and went, leaving some comfort behind him. Guy sat up all that night burning logs on the fire in the dressing room, out of the bedroom in which Mrs. Griffiths was lying. Every now and then I went in to him and found him sitting over the hearth shaking his great shaggy head, as he had a way of doing, and biting

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his fingers, and muttering, 'Poor soul, poor mother.' Sometimes he would come in creaking on tiptoe; but his presence seemed to agitate the poor woman, and I was obliged to motion him back again. Once when I went in and sat down for a few minutes in an arm-chair beside him, he suddenly began to tell me that there had been trouble between them that morning. 'It made it very hard to bear,' he said. I asked him what the trouble had been. 'I told her I thought I should like to marry,' Guy confessed with a rueful face. (Even then I could hardly help smiling.) 'Selfish beast that I am. I upset her, poor soul. I behaved like a brute.' His distress was so great that it was almost impossible to console him, and it was in vain to assure him that the attack had been produced by physical causes. 'Do you want to marry any one in particular?' I asked at last, to divert his thoughts, if I could, from the present. 'No,' said he; 'at least—of course she is out of the question—only I thought perhaps some day I should have liked to have a wife and children and a home of my own. Why, the counting-house is not so dreary as this place sometimes seems to me.' And then, though it was indeed no time for love-confidences, I could not help asking him who it was that was out of the question.

Guy Griffiths shrugged his great round shoulders impatiently, and gave something between a groan and sigh

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and smile—(dark and sulky as he looked at times, a smile brightened up his grim face very pleasantly).

'She don't even know my name,' he said. 'I saw her one night at the play, and then in a lane in the country a little time after.—I found out who she was. She's a daughter of old Barly the stockbroker. Belinda they call her—Miss Belinda. It's rather a silly name, isn't it?' (This, of course, I politely denied.) 'I'm sure I don't know what there is about her,' he went on in a gentle voice; 'all the fellows down there were head over ears in love with her. I asked—in fact I went down to Farmborough in hopes of meeting her again. I never saw such a sweet young creature—never. I never spoke to her in my life.' 'But you know her father?' I asked. 'Old Barly?—Yes,' said Guy. 'His wife was my father's cousin, and he and I are each other's trustees for some money which was divided between me and Mrs. Barly. My parents never kept up with them much, but I was named trustee in my father's place when he died. I didn't like to refuse. I had never seen Belinda then. Do you like sweet sleepy eyes that wake up now and then? Was that my mother calling?' For a minute he had forgotten the dreary present. It all came rushing back again. The bed creaked, the patient moved a little on her pillow, and there was a gleam of some intelligence in her pinched face. The clock struck four in quick tinkling tones; the rain seemed to have ceased, and the

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clouds to be parting; the rooms turned suddenly chill though the fires were burning.

When I went home, about five o'clock, all the stars had come out and were shooting brilliantly overhead. The garden seemed full of a sudden freshness and of secret life stirring in the darkness; the sick woman's light was burning faintly, and in my own window the little bright lamp was flickering which H.'s kind fingers had trimmed and put there ready for me when I should return. When we reached the little gate, Guy opened it and let me pass under some dripping green creeper which had been blown loose from the wall. He took my old hand in both his big ones, and began to say something that ended in a sort of inarticulate sound as he turned away and trudged back to his post again. I thought of the many meetings and partings at this little postern gate, and last words and protestations. Some may have been more sentimental perhaps than this one, but Guy's grunt of gratitude was more affecting to me than many a long string of words. I felt very sorry for him, poor old fellow, as I barred the door and climbed upstairs to my room. He sat up watching till the morning. But I was tired and soon went to sleep.

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II.

Some people do very well for a time. Chances are propitious, the way lies straight before them up a gentle inclined plane, with a pleasant prospect on either side. They go rolling straight on, they don't exactly know how, and take it for granted that it is their own prudence and good driving and deserts which have brought them prosperously so far upon their journey. And then one day they come to a turnpike, and destiny pops out of its little box and demands a toll, or prudence trips, or good sense shies at a scarecrow put up by the wayside,—or nobody knows why, but the whole machine breaks down on the road and can't be set going again. And then other vehicles go past it, hand-trucks, perambulators, cabs, omnibuses, and great prosperous barouches, and the people who were sitting in the broken-down equipage get out and walk away on foot.

On that celebrated and melancholy Black Monday of which we have all heard, poor John Barly and his three daughters came down the carpeted steps of their comfortable sociable for the last time, and disappeared at the wicket of a little suburban cottage,—disappeared out

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of the prosperous, pompous, highly respectable circle in which they had gyrated, dragged about by two fat bay horses, in the greatest decorum and respectability; dining out, receiving their friends, returning their civilities. Miss Barlys had left large cards with their names engraved upon them in return for other large cards upon which were inscribed equally respectable names, and the addresses of other equally commodious family mansions. A mansion—so the house-agents tell us—is a house like another with the addition of a back staircase. The Barlys and all their friends had back staircases to their houses and to their daily life as well. They only wished to contemplate the broad, swept, carpeted drawing-room flights. Indeed to Anna and Fanny Barly this making the best of things, card-leaving and visiting, seemed a business of vital importance. The youngest of the girls, who had been christened by the pretty silly name of Belinda, had only lately come home from school, and did not value these splendours and proprieties so highly as her sisters did. She had no great love for the life they led. Sometimes looking over the balusters of their great house in Capulet Square she had yawned out loud from very weariness, and then she would hear the sound echoing all the way up to the skylight, and reverberating down from baluster to baluster. If she went into the drawing-room, instead of the yawning echoes the shrill voices of Anna and of Fanny were vibrating monotonously

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as they complimented Lady Ogden upon her new barouche, until Belinda could bear it no longer and would jump up and run away to her bedroom to escape it all. She had a handsome bedroom, draped in green damask, becarpeted, four-posted, with an enormous mahogany wardrobe of which poor Belle was dreadfully afraid, for the doors would fly open of their own accord in the dead of night, revealing dark abysses and depths unknown, with black ghosts hovering suspended or motionless and biding their time. There were other horrors: shrouds waving in the blackness, feet stirring, and low creakings of garotters, which she did not dare to dwell upon as she hastily locked the doors and pushed the writing-table against them.

It must therefore be confessed, that to Belinda the days had been long and oppressive sometimes in this handsomely appointed Tyburnean palace. Anna, the eldest sister, was queen-regnant; she had both ability and inclination to take the lead. She was short, broad, and dignified, and some years older than either of her sisters. Her father respected her business-like mind, admired her ambition, regretted sometimes secretly that she had never been able to make up her mind to accept any of the eligible young junior partners, the doctor, the curate, who had severally proposed to her. But then of course, as Anna often said, they could not possibly have got on without her at home. She had been in no hurry to leave

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the comfortable kingdom where she reigned in undisputed authority, ratifying the decisions of the ministry downstairs, appealed to by the butler, respectfully dreaded by both the housemaids. Who was there to go against her? Mr. Barly was in town all day and left everything to her; Fanny, the second sister, was her faithful ally. Fanny was sprightly, twenty-one, with black eyes and a curl that was much admired. She was fond of fashion, flirting, and finery, inquisitive, talkative, feeble-minded, and entirely devoted to Anna. As for Belle, she had only come back from school the other day. Anna could not quite understand her at times. Fanny was of age and content to do as she was bid; here was Belle at eighteen asserting herself very strangely. Anna and Fanny seemed to pair off somehow, and Belle always had to hold her own without any assistance, unless, indeed, her father was present. He had a great tenderness and affection for his youngest child, and the happiest hour of the day to Belinda was when she heard him come home and call for her in his cheerful quavering voice. By degrees it seemed to her as she listened, that the cheerfulness seemed to be dying away out of his voice, and only the quaver remained; but that may have been fancy, and because she had taken a childish dislike to the echoes in the house.

At dinner-time, Anna used to ask her father how things were going in the City, and whether shirtings had risen any higher, and at what premium the Tre Rosas

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shares were held in the market. These were some shares in a Cornish mine company of which Mr. Barly was a director. Anna thought so highly of the whole concern that she had been anxious to invest a portion of her own and her sister Fanny's money in it. They had some small inheritance from their mother, of part of which they had the control when they came of age; the rest was invested in the Funds in Mr. Griffiths' name, and could not be touched. Poor Belle, being a minor, had to be content with sixty pounds a year for her pin-money, which was all she could get for her two thousand pounds.

When Anna talked business, Mr. Barly used to be quite dazzled by her practical clear-headedness, her calm foresight and powers of rapid calculation. Fanny used to prick up her ears and ask, shaking her curl playfully, how much girls must have to be heiresses, and did Anna think they should ever be heiresses? Anna would smile and nod her head, in a calm and chastened sort of way, at this childish impatience. 'You should be very thankful, Frances, for all you have to look to, and for your excellent prospects. Emily Ogden, with all her fine airs, would not be sorry to be in your place.' At which Fanny blushed up bright red, and Belinda jumped impatiently upon her chair, blinking her white eyelids impatiently over her clear grey eyes, as she had a way of doing. 'I can't bear talking about money,' she said; 'anything is better . . . .' Then she too stopped short and blushed.

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'Papa,' interrupted Fanny, playfully, 'when will you escort us to the pantomime again? The Ogdens are all going next Tuesday, and you have been most naughty and not taken us anywhere for such a long time.'

Mr. Barly, who rarely refused anything anybody asked him, pushed his chair away from the table and answered, with strange impatience for him,—'My dear, I have had no time lately for plays and amusements of any sort. After working from morning to night for you all I am tired, and want a little peace of an evening. I have neither spirits nor——'

'Dear papa,' said Belinda eagerly, 'come up into the drawing-room and sit in the easy-chair, and let me play you to sleep.' As she spoke, Belinda smiled a delightful fresh, sweet, tender smile, like sunshine falling on a fair landscape. No wonder the little stockbroker was fond of his youngest daughter. Frances was pouting, Anna frowned slightly as she locked up the wine, and turned over in her mind whether she might not write to the Ogdens and ask them to let Frances join their party; as for Belinda, playing Mozart to her father in the dim drawing-room upstairs, she was struck by the worn and harassed look in his face as he slept, snoring gently in accompaniment to her music. It was the last time Belle ever played upon the old piano. Three or four days after, the crash came. The great Tre Rosas Mining Company

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(Limited) had failed, and the old-established house of Barly and Co. unexpectedly stopped payment.

If poor Mr. Barly had done it on purpose, his ruin could not have been more complete and ingenious. When his affairs came to be looked into, and his liabilities had been met, it was found that an immense fortune had been muddled away, and that scarcely anything would be left but a small furnished cottage, which had been given for her life to an old aunt just deceased, and which reverted to Fanny, her godchild, and the small sum which still remained in the Three per Cents., of which mention has been made, and which could not be touched until Belle, the youngest of three daughters, should come of age.

After two or three miserable days of confusion—during which the machine which had been set going with so much trouble still revolved once or twice with the force of its own impetus, the butler answering the bell, the footman bringing up the coals, the cook sending up the dinner as usual—suddenly everything collapsed, and the great mass of furniture, servants, human creatures, animals, carriages, business and pleasure engagements, seemed overthrown together in a great struggling mass, panting and bewildered and trying to get free from the confusion of particles that no longer belonged to one another.

First, the cook packed up her things and some nice damask table-cloths and napkins, a pair of sheets, and Miss Barly's umbrella, which happened to be hanging in

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the hall; then the three ladies drove off with their father to the cottage, where it was decided they should go to be out of the way of any unpleasantness. He had no heart to begin again, and was determined to give up the battle. Belle sat with her father on the back seat of the carriage, looking up into his haggard face a little wistfully, and trying to be as miserable as the others. She could not help it,—a cottage in the country, ruin, roses, novelty, clean chintzes instead of damask, a little room with mignonette, cocks crowing, had a wicked, morbid attraction for her which she could not overcome. She had longed for such a life when she had gone down to stay with the Ogdens at Farmborough last month, and had seen several haystacks and lovely little thatched cottages, where she had felt she would have liked to spend the rest of her days; one in particular had taken her fancy, with dear little latticed windows and a pigeon-cote and two rosy little babies with a kitten toddling out from the ivy porch; but a great rough-looking man had come up in a slouched wide-awake and frightened Emily Ogden so much that she had pulled Belinda away in a hurry . . . . but here a sob from Fanny brought Belle back to her place in the barouche.

Anna felt she must bear up, and nerved herself to the effort. Upon her the blow fell more heavily than upon any of the others. Indignant, injured, angry with her father, furious with the managers, the directors, the shareholders, the secretary, the unfortunate company, with the

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Bankruptcy Court, the Ogdens, the laws of fate, the world in general, with Fanny for sobbing, and with Belle for looking placid, she sat blankly staring out of window as they drove past the houses where they had visited, and where she had been entertained an honoured guest; and now—she put the hateful thought away—bankrupt, disgraced! Her bonnet was crushed in, she did not say a word, but her face looked quite fierce and old, and frightened Fanny into fresh lamentations. These hysterics had been first brought on by the sight of Emily Ogden driving by in the new barouche. This was quite too much for her poor friend's fortitude. 'Emily will drop us, I know she will,' sobbed Fanny. 'Oh, Anna! will they ever come and ask us to their Thursday luncheon-parties any more?'

'My children,' said Mr. Barly, with a placid groan, pulling up the window, 'we are disgraced; we can only hide our heads away from the world. Do not expect that anyone will ever come near us again.' At which announcement Fanny went off into new tears and bewailings. As for the kind, bewildered, weak-headed, soft-hearted little man, he had been so utterly worn out, harassed, worried, and wearied of late, that it was almost a relief to him to think that this was indeed the case. He sat holding Belle's hand in his, stroking and patting it, and wondering that people so near London did not keep the roads in

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better repair. 'We must be getting near our new abode,' said he at last almost cheerfully.

'You speak as if you were glad of our shame, papa,' said Anna suddenly, turning round upon him.

'Oh, hush!' cried Belle, indignantly. Fortunately the coachman stopped at this moment on a spot a very long way off from Capulet Square; and leaning from his box, asked if it was that there little box across the common.

'Oh, what a sweet little place!' cried Belinda. But her heart rather sank as she told this dreadful story.

Myrtle Cottage was a melancholy little tumbledown place, looking over Dumbleton Common, which they had been crossing all this time. It was covered with stucco, cracked and stained and mouldy. There was a stained-glass window, which was broken. The verandah wanted painting. From outside it was evident that the white muslin curtains were not so fresh as they might have been. There was a little garden in front, planted with durable materials. Even out of doors, in the gardens in the suburbs, the box-edges, the laurel-bushes, and the fusty old jessamines are apt to look shabby in time, if they are never renewed. A certain amount of time and money might, perhaps, have made Myrtle Cottage into a pleasant little habitation; but (judging from appearances) its last inhabitants seemed to have been in some want of both these commodities. Its helpless new occupants were not

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likely to have much of either to spare. A little dining-room, with glass drop candlesticks and a rickety table, and a print of a church and a Dissenting minister on the wall. A little drawing-room, with a great horsehair sofa, a huge round table in the middle of the room, and more glass drop candlesticks, also a small work-table of glass over faded worsted embroidery. Four little bedrooms, mousey, musty, snuffy, with four-posts as terrific as any they had left behind, and a small black dungeon for a maid-servant. This was the little paradise which Belle had been picturing to herself all along the road, and at which she looked round half sighing, half dismayed. Their bundles, baskets, blankets, were handed in, and a cart full of boxes had arrived. Fanny's parrot was shrieking at the top of its voice on the narrow landing.

'What fun!' cried Belinda sturdily, instantly setting to work to get things into some order, while Fanny lay exhausted upon the horsehair sofa; and Anna, in her haughtiest tones, desired the coachman to drive home, and stood watching the receding carriage until it had dwindled away into the distance—coachman, hammer-cloth, bay horses, respectability, and all. When she re-entered the house, the parrot was screeching still, and Martha, the under-housemaid—now transformed into a sort of extract of butler, footman, ladies'-maid, and cook—was frying some sausages, of which the vulgar smell pervaded the place.

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III.

BELLE exclaimed, but it required all her courage and natural brightness of spirit to go on looking at the bright side of things, praising the cottage, working in the garden, giving secret assistance to the two bewildered maids who waited on the reduced little family, cheering her father, smiling, and putting the best face on things, as her sisters used to do at home. If it had been all front stairs in Capulet Square, it was all back staircase at the cottage. Rural roses, calm sunsets, long shadows across the common are all very well; but when puffs of smoke come out of the chimney and fill the little place; when, if the window is opened, a rush of wind and dust—worse almost than the smoke—comes eddying into the room, and careers round the four narrow walls; when poor little Fanny coughs and shudders, and wraps her shawl more closely round her with a groan; when the smell of the kitchen frying-pan perfumes the house, and a mouse scampers out of the cupboard, and blackbeetles lie struggling in the milk-jugs, and the pump runs dry, and spiders crawl out of the tea-caddy, and so forth; then, indeed, Belle deserves some

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credit for being cheerful under difficulties. She could not pretend to very high spirits, but she was brisk and willing, and ready to smile at her father's little occasional puns and feeble attempts at jocularity. Anna, who had been so admirable as a general, broke down under the fatigue of the actual labour in the trenches which belonged to their new life. A great many people can order others about very brilliantly and satisfactorily, who fail when they have to do the work themselves.

Some of the neighbours called upon them, but the Ogdens never appeared. Poor little Fanny used to take her lace work and sit stitching and looping her thread at the window which overlooked the common with its broad roads, crossing and recrossing the plain; carriages came rolling by, people came walking, children ran past the windows of the little cottage, but the Ogdens never. Once Fanny thought she recognised the barouche—Lady Ogden and Emily sitting in front, Matthew Ogden on the back seat; surely, yes, surely it was him. But the carriage rolled off in a cloud of dust, and disappeared behind the wall of the neighbouring park; and Frances finished the loop, and passed her needle in and out of the muslin, feeling as if it was through her poor little heart that she was piercing and sticking; she pulled out a long thread, and it seemed to her as if the sunset stained it red like blood.

In the meanwhile Belle's voice had been singing away

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overhead, and Fanny, going upstairs presently, found her, with one of the maids, clearing out one of the upper rooms. The window was open, the furniture was piled up in the middle. Belle, with her sleeves tucked up and her dress carefully pinned out of the dust, was standing on a chair, hammer in hand, and fixing up some dimity curtains against the window. Table-cloths, brooms, pails, and brushes were lying about, and everything looked in perfect confusion. As Fanny stood looking and exclaiming, Anna also came to the door from her own room, where she had been taking a melancholy nap.

'What a mess you are making here!' cried the elder sister, very angrily. 'How can you take up Martha's time, Belinda? And oh! how can you forget yourself to this degree? You seem to *exult* in your father's disgrace.' Belinda flushed up.

'Really, Anna, I do not know what you mean,' said she, turning round, vexed for a minute, and clasping a long curtain in both arms. 'I could not bear to see my father's room looking so shabby and neglected; there is no disgrace in attending to his comfort. See, we have taken down those dusty curtains, and we are going to put up some others,' said the girl, springing down from the chair and exhibiting her treasures.

'And pray where is the money to come from,' said Anna, 'to pay for these wonderful changes?'

'They cost no money,' said Belinda, laughing. 'I made

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them myself with my own two hands. Don't you remember my old white dress that you never liked, Anna? Look how I have pricked my finger. Now, go down,' said the girl, in her pretty imperative way, 'and don't come up again till I call you.'

Go down at Belle's bidding. . . .

Anna went off fuming, and immediately set to work also, but in a different fashion. She unfortunately found that her father had returned, and was sitting in the little sitting-room down below by himself, with a limp paper of the day before open upon his knees. He was not reading. He seemed out of spirits, and was gazing in a melancholy way at the smouldering fire, and rubbing his bald head in a perplexed and troubled manner. Seeing this, the silly woman, by way of cheering and comforting the poor old man, began to exclaim at Belinda's behaviour, to irritate him, and overwhelm him with allusions and reproaches.

'Scrubbing and slaving with her own hands,' said Anna. 'Forgetting herself; bringing us down lower indeed than we are already sunk. Papa, she will not listen to me. You should tell her that you forbid her to put us all to shame by her behaviour.'

When Belle, panting, weary, triumphant, and with a blackened nose and rosy cheek, opened the door of the room presently and called her father exultingly, she did not notice, as she ran upstairs before him, how wearily he followed her. A flood of light came from the dreary little

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room overhead. It had been transformed into a bower of white dimity, bright windows, clean muslin blinds. The fusty old carpet was gone, and a clean crumb-cloth had been put down, with a comfortable rug before the fire-place. A nosegay of jessamine stood on the chimney, and at each corner of the four-post bed the absurd young decorator had stuck a smart bow, made out of some of her own blue ribbons, in place of the terrible plumes and tassels which had waved there in dust and darkness before. One of the two armchairs which blocked up the wall of the dining-room had been also covered out of some of Belinda's stores, and stood comfortably near the open window. The sun was setting over the great common outside, behind the mill and the distant fringe of elm-trees. Martha, standing all illuminated by the sunshine, with her mop in her hand, was grinning from ear to ear, and Belle turned and rushed into her father's arms. But Mr. Barly was quite overcome. 'My child,' he said, 'why do you trouble yourself so much for me? Your sister has told me all. I don't deserve it. I cannot bear that you should be brought to this. My Belle working and slaving with her own hands through my fault—through my fault.' The old man sat down on the side of the bed by which he had been standing, and laid his face in his hands, in a perfect agony of remorse and regret. Belinda was dismayed by the result of her labours. In vain she tried to cheer him and comfort him. The sweeter she seemed in his eyes, the more miserable

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the poor father grew at the condition to which he had brought her.

For many days after he went about in a sort of despair, thinking what he could do to retrieve his ruined fortunes; and if Belinda still rose betimes to see to his comfort and the better ordering of the confused little household, she took care not to let it be known. Anna came down at nine, Fanny at ten. Anna would then spend several hours regretting her former dignities, reading the newspaper and the fashionable intelligence, while the dismal strains of Fanny's piano (there was a jangling piano in the little drawing-room,) streamed across the common. To a stormy spring, with wind flying and dust dashing against the window-panes, and grey clouds swiftly bearing across the wide open country, had succeeded a warm and brilliant summer, with sunshine flooding and spreading over the country. Anna and Fanny were able to get out a little now, but they were soon tired, and would sit down under a tree and remark to one another how greatly they missed their accustomed drives. Belinda, who had sometimes at first disappeared now and then to cry mysteriously a little bit by herself over her troubles, now discovered that at eighteen, with good health and plenty to do, happiness is possible, even without a carriage.

One day Mr. Barly, who still went into the City from habit, came home with some news which had greatly

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excited him. Wheal Tre Rosas, of which he still held a great many shares which he had never been able to dispose of, had been giving some signs of life. A fresh call was to be made; some capitalist, with more money than he evidently knew what to do with, had been buying up a great deal of the stock. The works were to be resumed. Mr. Barly had always been satisfied that the concern was a good one. He would give everything he had, he told Anna that evening, to be able to raise enough money now to buy up more of the shares. His fortune was made if he could do so; his children replaced in their proper position, and his name restored. Anna was in a state of greater flutter, if possible, than her father himself. Belle sighed; she could not help feeling doubtful, but she did not like to say much on the subject.

'Papa, this Wheal has proved a very treacherous wheel of fortune to us,' she hazarded, blushing and bending over her sewing; 'we are very, very happy as we are.'

'Happy?' said Anna with a sneer.

'Really, Belinda, you are too romantic,' said Fanny with a titter; while Mr. Barly cried out, in an excited way, 'that she should be happier yet, and all her goodness and dutifulness should be rewarded in time.' A sort of presentiment of evil came over Belinda, and her eyes filled up with tears; but she stitched them away and said no more.

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Unfortunately the only money Mr. Barly could think of to lay his hands upon was that sum in the Three per Cents. upon which they were now living; and even if he chose he could not touch any of it until Belinda came of age; unless, indeed, young Mr. Griffiths would give him permission to do so.

'Go to him, papa,' cried Anna enthusiastically. 'Go to him; entreat, insist upon it, if necessary.'

All that evening Anna and Frances talked over their brilliant prospects. 'I should like to see the Ogdens again,' said poor little Fanny. 'Perhaps we shall if we go back to Capulet Square.' 'Certainly, certainly,' said Anna. 'I have heard that this Mr. Griffiths is a most uncouth and uncivilised person to deal with,' continued Miss Barly, with her finger on her chin. 'Papa, wouldn't it be better for me to go to Mr. Griffiths instead of you?' This, however, Mr. Barly would not consent to.

Anna could hardly contain her vexation and spite when he came back next day dispirited, crestfallen, and utterly wretched and disappointed. Mr. Griffiths would have nothing to say to it.

'What's the good of a trustee,' said he to Mr. Barly, 'if he were to let you invest your money in such a speculative chance as that? Take my advice, and sell out your shares now if you can for anything you can get.'

'A surly, disagreeable fellow,' said poor old Mr.

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Barly. 'I heartily wish he had nothing to do with our affairs.'

Anna fairly stamped with rage. 'What insolence, when it is our own. Papa, you have no spirit to allow such interference.'

Mr. Barly looked at her gravely, and said he should not allow it. Anna did not know what he meant.

Belinda was not easy about her father all this time. He came and went in an odd excited sort of way, stopping short sometimes as he was walking across the room, and standing absorbed in thought! One day he went into the City unexpectedly about the middle of the day, and came back looking quite odd, pale, with curious eyes; something was wrong, she could not tell what. In the meantime Wheal Tre Rosas seemed, spite of Mr. Griffiths' prophecies, to be steadily rising in the world. More business had been done, the shares were a trifle higher. A meeting of directors was convened, and actually a small dividend was declared at Midsummer. It really seemed as if there was some chance after all that Anna should be reinstated in the barouche, in Capulet Square, and her place in society. She and Fanny were half wild with delight. 'When we leave'—was the beginning of every sentence they uttered. Fanny wrote the good news to her friend Miss Ogden, and, under these circumstances, to Fanny's unfeigned delight, Emily Ogden thought herself justified in driving over to the village one fine after-

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noon and affably partaking of a cracked cupful of five o'clock tea. It was slightly smoked, and the milk was turned. Belinda had gone out for a walk and was not there to see to it all; I am afraid she did not quite forgive Emily the part she had played, and could not make up her mind to meet her.

One morning Anna was much excited by the arrival of a letter directed to Mr. Barly in great round handwriting, and with a huge seal, all over bears and griffins. Her father was for ever expecting news of his beloved Tre Rosas, and he broke the seal with some curiosity. But this was only an invitation to dine and sleep at Castle Gardens from Mr. Griffiths, who said he had an offer to make Mr. Barly, and concluded by saying that he hoped Mr. Barly forgave him for the ungracious part he had been obliged to play the other day, and that, in like circumstances, he would do the same by him.

'I shan't go,' said Mr. Barly, a little doggedly, putting the letter down.

'Not go, papa? Why, you may be able to talk him over if you get him quietly to yourself. Certainly you must go, papa,' said Anna. 'Oh! I'm sure he means to relent—how nice!' said Fanny. Even Belinda thought it was a pity he should not accept the invitation, and Mr. Barly gave way as usual. He asked them if they had any commands for him in town.

'Oh, thank you, papa,' said Frances. 'If you are

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going shopping, I wish you would bring me back a blue alpaca, and a white grenadine, and a pink sou-poult, and a ——'

'My dear Fanny, that will be quite sufficient for the short time you remain here,' interrupted Anna, who went on to give her father several commissions of her own—some writing-paper stamped with Barly Lodge and their crest in one corner; a jacket with buttons for the knife-boy they had lately engaged upon the strength of their coming good fortune; a new umbrella, a house-agent's list of mansions in the neighbourhood of Capulet Square, the *Journal des Modes*, and the *New Court Guide*. 'Let me see, there was something else,' said Anna, thoughtfully.

'Belle,' said Mr. Barly, 'how comes it you ask for nothing? What can I bring you, my child?'

Belle looked up with one of her bright melancholy smiles and replied, 'If you should see any roses, papa, I think I should like a bunch of roses. We have none in the garden.'

'Roses!' cried Fanny, laughing. 'I didn't know you cared for anything but what was useful, Belle.'

'I quite expected you would ask for a saucepan or a mustard-pot,' said Anna, with a sneer.

Belle sighed again, and then the three went and stood at the garden-gate to see their father off. It made a pretty little group for the geese on the common to con-

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template,—the two young sisters at the wicket, the elder under the shade of the verandah, Belle upright, smiling, waving her slim hand; she was above the middle height, she had fair hair and dark eyebrows and grey eyes, over which she had a peculiar way of blinking her smooth white eyelids;—and all about, the birds, the soft winds, the great green common with its gorgeous furze-blossom blazing against the low bank of clouds in the horizon. Close at hand a white pony was tranquilly cropping the grass, and two little village children were standing outside the railings, gazing up open-mouthed at the pretty ladies who lived at the cottage.

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IV.

THE clouds which had been gathering all the afternoon broke shortly before Mr. Barly reached his entertainer's house. He had tried to get there through Kensington Gardens, but could not make out the way, and went wandering round and round in some perplexity under the great trees with their creaking branches. The storm did not last long and the clouds dispersed at sunset. When Mr. Barly rang at the gate of the villa in Castle Gardens at last that evening, he was weary, wet through, and far less triumphant than he had been when he left home in the morning. The butler who let him in gave the bag which he had been carrying to the footman, and showed him the way upstairs immediately to the comfortable room which had been made ready for him. Upholsterers had done the work on the whole better than Belle with all her loving labour. The chairs were softer than her print-covered horsehair cushions. The wax-lights were burning although it was broad daylight. Mr. Barly went to the bay-window. The garden outside was a sight to see: smooth lawns, arches, roses in profusion and abundance,

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hanging and climbing and clustering everywhere, a distant gleam of a fountain, of a golden sky, a chirruping and rustling in the bushes and trellises after the storm. The sunset which was lighting up the fern on the rain-sprinkled common was twinkling through the rose-petals here, bringing out odours and aromas and whiffs of delicious scent. Mr. Barly thought of Belle, and how he should like to see her flitting about in the garden and picking roses to her heart's content. As he stood there he thought, too, with a pang, of his wife whom he had lost, and sighed in a sort of despair at the troubles which had fallen upon him of late; what would he not give to undo the work of the last few months, he thought—nay, of the last few days? He had once come to this very house with his wife in their early days of marriage. He remembered it now, although he had not thought of it before.

Sometimes it happens to us all that things which happened ever so long ago seem to make a start out of their proper places in the course of time, and come after us, until they catch us up, as it were, and surround us, so that one can hear the voices, and see the faces and colours, and feel the old sensations and thrills as keenly as at the time they occurred—all so curiously and strangely vivid that one can scarcely conceive it possible that years and years perhaps have passed since it all happened, and that the present shock proceeds from an ancient and almost forgotten impulse. And so as Mr. Barly looked and remem-

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bered and thought of the past, a sudden remorse and shame came over him. He seemed to see his wife standing in the garden, holding the roses up over her head, looking like Belle; like, yet unlike. Why it should have been so, at the thought of his wife among the flowers, I cannot tell; but as he remembered her he began to think of what he had done—that he was there in the house of the man he had defrauded,—he began to ask himself how could he face him? how could he sit down beside him at table, and break his bread? The poor old fellow fell back with a groan in one of the comfortable arm-chairs. Should he confess? Oh, no—no, that would be the most terrible of all!

What he had done is simply told. When Guy Griffiths refused to let Mr. Barly lay hands on any of the money which he had in trust for his daughters, the foolish and angry old man had sold out a portion of the sum belonging to Mr. Griffiths which still remained in his own name. It had not seemed like dishonesty at the time, but now he would have gladly—oh, how gladly! awakened to find it all a dream. He dressed mechanically, turning over every possible chance in his own mind. Let Wheal Tre Rosas go on and prosper, the first money should go to repay his loan, and no one would be the wiser. He went down into the library again when he was ready. It was empty still, and, to his relief, the master of the house had not yet come back. He waited a very long time, looking at the clock,

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at the reviews on the table, at the picture of Mrs. Griffiths, whom he could remember in her youth, upon the wall. The butler came in again to say that his master had not yet returned. Some message had come by a boy, which was not very intelligible,—he had been detained in the City. Mrs. Griffiths was not well enough to leave her room, but she hoped Mr. Barly would order dinner,—anything he required,—and that her son would shortly return.

It was very late. There was nothing else to be done. Mr. Barly found a fire lighted in the great dining-room, dinner laid, one plate and one knife and fork, at the end of the long table. The dinner was excellent, so was the wine. The butler uncorked a bottle of champagne, the cook sent up chickens and all sorts of good things. Mr. Barly almost felt as if he, by some strange metempsychosis, had been converted into the owner of this handsome dwelling and all that belonged to it. At twelve o'clock Mr. Griffiths had not yet returned, and his guest, after a somewhat perplexed and solitary meal, retired to rest.

Mr. Barly breakfasted by himself again next morning. Mr. Griffiths had not returned all night. In his secret heart Mr. Griffiths' guest was almost relieved by the absence of his entertainer: it seemed like a respite. Perhaps, after all, everything would go well, and the confession which he had contemplated with such terror the night before need never be made. For the present it was clearly no use to wait any longer at the house. Mr. Barly

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asked for a cab to take him to the station, left his compliments and regrets, and a small sum of money behind him, and then, as the cab delayed, strolled out into the front garden to wait for it.

Even in the front court the roses were all abloom; a great snow cluster was growing over the doorway, a pretty tea-rose was hanging its head over the scraper; against the outer railing which separated the house from the road, rose-trees had been planted. The beautiful pink fragrant heads were pushing through the iron railings, and a delicious little rose-wind came blowing in the poor old fellow's face. He began to think again—no wonder—of Belle and her fancy for roses, and mechanically, without much reflecting upon what he was about, he stopped and inhaled the ravishing sweet smell of the great dewy flowers, and then put out his hand and gathered a spray from which three roses were hanging; . . . as he gathered it, a sharp thorn ran into his finger, and a heavy grasp was laid upon his arm. . . .

'So it is you, is it, who sneak in and steal my roses?' said an angry voice. 'Now that I know who it is, I shall give you in charge.'

Mr. Barly looked round greatly startled. He met the fierce glare of two dark brown eyes under shaggy brows, that were frowning very fiercely. A broad, thick-set, round-shouldered young man of forbidding aspect had laid hold of

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him. The young man let go his grasp when he saw the mistake he had made, but did not cease frowning.

'Oh! it is you, Mr. Barly,' he said.

'I was just going,' said the stockbroker, meekly. 'I am glad you have returned in time for me to see you, Mr. Griffiths. I am sorry I took your rose. My youngest is fond of them, and I thought I might, out of all this garden-full, you would not—she had asked——'

There was something so stern and unforgiving in Mr. Griffiths' face that the merchant stumbled in his words and stopped short surprised, in the midst of his explanations.

'The roses were not yours, not if there were ten gardens full. I won't have my roses broken off,' said Griffiths; 'they should be cut with a knife. Come back with me; I want to have a little talk with you, Mr. Barly.'

Somehow the old fellow's heart began to beat, and he felt himself turn rather sick.

'I was detained last night by some trouble in my office. One of my clerks, in whom I thought I could have trusted, absconded yesterday afternoon. I have been all the way to Liverpool in pursuit of him. What do you think should be done with him?' And Mr. Griffiths, from under his thick eyebrows, gave a quick glance at his present victim, and seemed to expect some sort of answer.

'You prosperous men cannot realise what it is to be greatly tempted,' said Mr. Barly, with a faint smile.

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'Do you know that Wheal Tre Rosas has come to grief a second time?' said young Mr. Griffiths abruptly, holding out the morning's *Times*, as they walked along. 'I am *not* a prosperous man; I had a great many shares in that unlucky concern.'

Poor Barly stopped short and turned quite pale, and began to shake so that he had to put his hand out and lean against the wall.

'Failed! Was he doomed to misfortune? Then there was never any chance for him—never. No hope! No hope of paying back the debt which weighed upon his conscience. He could not realise it. Failed! The rose had fallen to the ground;—the poor unlucky man stood still, staring blankly in the other's grim, unrelenting face.

'I am ruined,' he said.

'You are ruined! Is that the worst you have to tell me?' said Mr. Griffiths, still looking piercingly at him. Then the other felt that he knew all.

'I have been very unfortunate—and very much to blame,' said Mr. Barly, still trembling;—'terribly to blame,—Mr. Griffiths. I can only throw myself upon your clemency.'

'My clemency! my mercy! I am no philanthropist,' said Guy, savagely. 'I am a man of business, and you have defrauded me!'

'Sir,' said the stockbroker, finding some odd comfort

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in braving the worst, 'you refused to let me take what was my own;—I have sold out some of your money to invest in this fatal concern. Heaven knows it was not for myself, but for the sake of—of—others; and I thought to repay you ere long. You can repay yourself now. You need not reproach me any more. You can send me to prison if you like. I—I—don't much care what happens. My Belle, my poor Belle,—my poor girls!'

All this time Guy said never a word. He motioned Mr. Barly to follow him into the library. Mr. Barly obeyed, and stood meekly waiting for the coming onslaught. He stood in the full glare of the morning sun, which was pouring through the unblinded window. His poor old scanty head was bent, and his hair stood on end in the sunshine.

His eyes, avoiding the glare, went vacantly travelling along the scroll-work on the fender, and so to the coal-scuttle and to the skirting on the wall, and back again. Dishonoured,—yes. Bankrupt,—yes. Threescore years had brought him to this,—to shame, to trouble. It was a hard world for unlucky people, but Mr. Barly was too much broken, too weary and indifferent, to feel very bitterly even against the world. Meanwhile Guy was going on with his reflections, and like those amongst us who are still young and strong, he could put more life and energy into his condemnation and judgment of actions done, than the unlucky perpetrators had to give to the

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very deeds themselves. Some folks do wrong as well as right, with scarcely more than half a mind to it.

'How could you do such a thing?' cried the young man indignantly, beginning to rush up and down the room in his hasty, clumsy way, knocking against tables and chairs as he went along. 'How could you do it?' he repeated. 'I learnt it yesterday by chance. What can I say to you that your own conscience should not have told you already? How could you do it?' Guy had reached the great end window, and stamped with vexation and a mixture of anger and sorrow. For all his fierceness and gruffness, he was sorry for the poor feeble old man whose fate he held in his hand. There was the garden outside, and its treasure and glory of roses; there was the rose-spray, lying on the ground, that old Barly had taken. It was lying broken and shining upon the gravel—one rose out of the hundreds that were bursting, and blooming, and fainting and falling on their spreading stems. It was like the wrong old Barly had done his kinsman—one little wrong Guy thought, one little handful out of all his abundance. He looked back, and by chance caught sight of their two figures reflected in the glass at the other end of the room,—his own image, the strong, round-backed, broad-shouldered young man, with gleaming white teeth and black bristling hair; the feeble and uncertain culprit, with his broken wandering looks, waiting his sentence. It was not Guy who delivered it. It came—no very terrible one

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after all—prompted by some unaccountable secret voice and impulse. Have we not all of us sometimes suddenly felt ashamed in our lives in the face of misfortune and sorrow? Are we Pharisees, standing in the market-place, with our phylacteries displayed to the world? we ask ourselves, in dismay,—does this man go home justified rather than we? Guy was not the less worthy of his Belinda, poor fellow, because a thought of her crossed his mind, and because he blushed up, and a gentle look came into his eyes, and a shame into his heart—a shame of his strength and prosperousness, of his probity and high honour. When had he been tempted? What was it but a chance that he had been born what he was? And yet old Barly, in all his troubles, had a treasure in his possession for which Guy felt he would give all his good fortune and good repute, his roses—red, white, and golden—his best heart's devotion, which he secretly felt to be worth all the rest. Now was the time, the young man thought, to make that proposition which he had in his mind.

'Look here,' said Guy, hanging his great shaggy head, and speaking quickly and thickly, as if he was the culprit instead of the accuser. 'You imply it was for your daughter's sake that you cheated me. I cannot consent to act as you would have me do, and take your daughter's money to pay myself back. But if one of them,—Miss Belinda, since she likes roses,—chooses to come here and work the debt off, she can do so. My mother is in bad

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nealth and wants a companion; she will engage her at—let me see, a hundred guineas a-year, and in this way, by degrees, the debt will be cleared off.'

'In twenty years,' said Mr. Barly, bewildered, relieved, astonished.

'Yes, in twenty years,' said Guy, as if that was the most natural thing in the world. 'Go home and consult her, and come back and give me the answer.'

And as he spoke, the butler came in to say that the hansom was at the door.

Poor old Barly bent his worn meek head and went out He was shaken and utterly puzzled. If Guy had told him to climb up the chimney he would have obeyed. He could only do as he was bid. As it was, he clambered with difficulty into the hansom, told the man to go to the station for Dumbleton, and he was driving off gladly when someone called after the cab. The old man peered out anxiously. Had Griffiths changed his mind? Was his heart hardened like Pharaoh's at the eleventh hour?

It was certainly Guy who came hastily after the cab, looking more awkward and sulky than ever. 'Hoy! Stop! You have forgotten the roses for your daughter,' said he, thrusting in a great bunch of sweet foam and freshness. As the cab drove along, people passing by looked up and envied the man who was carrying such loveliness through the black and dreary London streets. Could they have seen the face looking out behind the roses they might have ceased to envy.

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Belle was on the watch for her father at the garden-gate, and exclaimed with delight, as she saw him toiling up the hill from the station with his huge bunch of flowers. She came running to meet him with fluttering skirts and outstretched hands, and sweet smiles gladdening her face. 'Oh, papa, how lovely! Have you had a pleasant time?' Her father hardly responded. 'Take the roses, Belle,' he said. 'I have paid for them dearly enough.' He went into the house wearily, and sat down in the shabby arm-chair. And then he turned and called Belinda to him wistfully and put his trembling arm round about her. Poor old Barly was no mighty Jephthah; but his feeble old head bent with some such pathetic longing and remorse over his Belle as he drew her to him, and told her, in a few simple broken words, all the story of what had befallen him in those few hours since he went away. He could not part from her. 'I can't, I can't,' he said, as the girl put her tender arms round his neck. . . .

Guy came to see me a few days after his interview with old Mr. Barly, and told me that his mother had surprised him by her willing acquiescence in the scheme. I could have explained matters to him a little, but I thought it best to say nothing. Mrs. Griffiths had overheard, and understood a word or two of what he had said to me that night, when she was taken ill. Was it some sudden remorse for the past? was it a new-born mother's tenderness stirring in her cold heart, which made her question and

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cross-question me the next time that I was alone with her? There had often been a talk of some companion or better sort of attendant. After the news came of poor old Barly's failure, it was Mrs. Griffiths herself who first vaguely alluded again to this scheme.

'I might engage one of those girls—the—the Belinda, I think you called her?'

I was touched and took her cold hand and kissed it.

'I am sure she would be an immense comfort to you,' I said. 'You would never regret your kindness.'

The sick woman sighed and turned away impatiently, and the result was the invitation to dinner, which turned out so disastrously.

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V.

When Mr. Barly came down to breakfast the morning after his return, he found another of those great square official-looking letters upon the table. There was a cheque in it for 100*l.* 'You will have to meet heavy expenses,' the young man wrote, 'I am not sorry to have an opportunity of proving to you that it was not the money which you have taken from me I grudged, but the manner in which you took it. The only reparation you can make me is by keeping the enclosed for your present necessity.'

In truth the family prospects were not very brilliant. Myrtle Cottage was resplendent with clean windows and well-scrubbed door-steps, but the furniture wanted repairing, the larder refilling. Belle could not darn up the broken flap of the dining-room table, nor conjure legs of mutton out of bare bones, though she got up ever so early; sweeping would not mend the hole in the carpet, nor could she dust the mildew-stains off the walls, the cracks out of the looking-glass.

Anna was morose, helpless, and jealous of the younger girl's influence over her father. Fanny was delicate; one

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gleam of happiness, however, streaked her horizon: Emily Ogden had written to invite her to spend a few days there. When Mr. Barly and his daughter had talked over Mr. Griffiths' proposition, Belle's own good sense told her that it would be folly to throw away this good chance. Let Mrs. Griffiths be ever so trying and difficult to deal with, and her son a thousand times sterner and ruder than he had already shown himself, she was determined to bear it all. Belinda knew her own powers, and felt as if she could endure anything, and that she should never forget the generosity and forbearance he had shown her poor father. Anna was delighted that her sister should go; she threw off the shawl in which she had muffled herself up ever since their reverses, brightened up wonderfully, talked mysteriously of Fanny's prospects as she helped both the girls to pack, made believe to shed a few tears as Belinda set off with her father, and bustled back into the house with renewed importance. Belinda looked back and waved her hand, but Anna's back was already turned upon her, and she was giving directions to the page.

Poor Belinda! For all her courage and cheerfulness her heart sank a little as they reached the great bronze gates in Castle Gardens. She would have been more unhappy still if she had not had to keep up her father's spirits. It was almost dinner-time, and Mrs. Griffiths maid came down with a message. Her mistress was tired, and just going to bed, and would see her in the morning;

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Mr. Griffiths was dining in town; Miss Williamson would call upon Miss Barly that evening.

Dinner had been laid as usual in the great dining-room, with its marble columns and draperies, and Dutch pictures of game and of birds and flowers. Three servants were in waiting, a great silver chandelier lighted the dismal meal, huge dish-covers were upheaved, decanters of wine were handed round, all the *entrées* and delicacies came over again. Belle tried to eat to keep her father in company. She even made little jokes, and whispered to him that they evidently meant to fatten her up. The poor old fellow cheered up by degrees; the good claret warmed his feeble pulse, the good fare comforted and strengthened him. 'I wish Martha would make us ice-puddings,' said Belle, helping him to a glittering mass of pale-coloured cream, with nutmeg and vanilla, and all sorts of delicious spices. He had just finished the last mouthful when the butler started and rushed out of the room, a door banged, a bell rang violently, a loud scraping was heard in the hall, and an echoing voice said, 'Are they come? Are they in the dining-room?' And the crimson curtain was lifted up, and the master of the house entered the room carrying a bag and a great-coat over his arm. As he passed the sideboard the button of the coat caught in the fringe of a cloth which was spread upon it, and in a minute the cloth and all the glasses and plates which had been left there came to the ground with a wild

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crash, which would have made Belle laugh, if she had not been too nervous even to smile.

Guy merely told the servants to pick it all up, and put down the things he was carrying and walked straight across the room to the two frightened people at the far end of the table. Poor fellow! After shaking hands with old Barly and giving Belle an abrupt little nod, all he could find to say was,—

'I hope you came of your own free will, Miss Barly?' and as he spoke he gave a shy scowl and eyed her all over.

'Yes,' Belle answered, blinking her soft eyes to see him more clearly.

'Then I'm very much obliged to you,' said Guy.

This was such an astonishingly civil answer that Belinda's courage rose.

Poor Belinda's heart failed her again, however, when Griffiths, still in an agony of shyness, then turned to her father, and in his roughest voice said,—

'You leave early in the morning, but I hope we shall keep your daughter for a very long time.'

Poor fellow! he meant no harm and only intended this by way of conversation. Belle in her secret heart said to herself that he was a cruel brute; and poor Guy, having made this impression, broken a dozen wine-glasses, and gone through untold struggles of shyness, now wished them both good-night.

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'Good-night, Mr. Barly; good-night, Miss Belle,' said he. Something in his voice caused Belle to relent a little.

'Good-night, Mr. Griffiths,' said the girl, standing up, a slight graceful figure, simple and nymph-like, amidst all this pomp of circumstance. As Griffiths shuffled out of the room he saw her still; all night he saw her in his dreams. That bright winsome young creature, dressed in white soft folds, with all the gorgeous gildings and draperies, and the lights burning, and the pictures and gold cups glimmering round about her. They were his, and as many more of them as he chose: the inanimate, costly, sickening pomps and possessions; but a pure spirit like that, to be a bright living companion for him? Ah, no! that was not to be—not for him, not for such as him. Guy, for the first time in his life, as he went upstairs that evening, stopped and looked at himself attentively in the great glass on the staircase. He saw a great loutish, roundbacked fellow, with a shaggy head and brown glittering eyes, and little strong white teeth like a dog's; he gave an uncouth sudden caper of rage and regret at his own appearance. 'To think that happiness and life itself and love eternal depend upon tailors and hair-oil,' groaned poor Guy, as he went into his room to write letters.

Mrs. Griffiths did not see Belle that evening; she was always nervously averse to seeing strangers, but she had sent for me to speak to her, and as I was leaving she had

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asked me to go down and speak to Miss Barly before I went. Belinda was already in her room, bnt I ventured to knock at the door. She came to meet me with a bright puzzled face and all her pretty hair falling loose about her face. She had not a notion who I was, but begged me to come in. When I had explained things a little, she pulled out a chair for me to sit down.

'This house seems to me so mysterious and unlike anything else I have ever known,' said she, 'that I'm very grateful to anyone who will tell me what I'm to do here—please sit down a little while.'

I told her that she would have to write notes, to add up bills, to read to Mrs. Griffiths, and to come to me whenever she wanted any help or comfort. 'You were quite right to come,' said I. 'They are excellent people. Guy is the kindest, best fellow in the whole world, and I have long heard of you, Miss Barly, and I'm sure such a good daughter as you have been will be rewarded some day.'

Belle looked puzzled, grateful, a little proud, and very charming. She told me afterwards that it had been a great comfort to her father to hear of my little visit to her, and that she had succeeded in getting him away without any very painful scene.

Poor Belle! I wonder how many tears she shed that day after her father was gone? While she was waiting to be admitted to Mrs. Griffiths she amused herself by

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wandering about the house, dropping a little tear here and there as she went along, and trying to think that it amused her to see so many yards of damask and stair-carpeting, all exactly alike, so many acres of chintz of the same pattern.

'Mr. Griffiths desired me to say that this tower room was to be made ready for you to sit in, ma'am,' said the respectful butler, meeting her and opening a door. 'It has not been used before.' And he gave her the key, to which a label was affixed, with 'MISS BARLY'S ROOM,' written upon it, in the housekeeper's scrawling handwriting.

Belle gave a little shriek of admiration. It was a square room, with four windows, overlooking the gardens, the distant park, and the broad cheerful road which ran past the house. An ivy screen had been trained over one of the windows, roses were clustering in garlands round the deep sill casements. There was an Indian carpet, and pretty silk curtains, and comfortable chintz chairs and sofas, upon which beautiful birds were flying and lilies wreathing. There was an old-fashioned-looking piano, too, and a great book-case filled with books and music. 'They certainly treat me in the most magnificent way,' thought Belle, sinking down upon the sofa in the window which overlooked the rose-garden, and inhaling a delicious breath of fragrant air. 'They can't mean to be very unkind.' Belle, who was a little curious, it must be confessed,

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looked at everything, made secret notes in her mind, read the titles of the books, examined the china, discovered a balcony to her turret. There was a little writing-table, too, with paper and pens and inks of various colours, which especially pleased her. A glass cup of cut roses had been placed upon it, and two dear little green books, in one of which some one had left a paper-cutter.

The first was a book of fairy tales, from which I hope the good fairy editress will forgive me for stealing a sentence or two.

The other little green book was called the 'Golden Treasury;' and when Belle took it up, it opened where the paper-cutter had been left, at the seventh page, and someone had scored the sonnet there. Belle read it, and somehow, as she read, the tears in her eyes started afresh.

> Being your slave, what should I do but tend
> Upon the hours and times of your desire?

it began. 'To——' had been scrawled underneath; and then the letter following the 'To' erased. Belle blinked her eyes over it, but could make nothing out. A little further on she found another scoring—

> O, my love's like a red, red rose
> That's newly sprung in June!
> O, my love's like the melody
> That's sweetly played in tune!

and this was signed with a G.

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'Love! That is not for me; but I wish I had a slave,' thought poor Belle, hanging her head over the book as it lay open in her lap, 'and that he was clever enough to tell me what my father is doing at this minute.' She could imagine it for herself, alas! without any magic interference. She could see the dreary little cottage, her poor old father wearily returning alone. She nearly broke down at the thought, but someone knocked at the door at that instant, and she forced herself to be calm as one of the servants came in with a telegram. Belinda tore open her telegram in some alarm and trembling terror of bad news from home; and then smiled a sweet loving smile of relief. The telegram came from Guy. It was dated from his office. 'Your father desires me to send word that he is safe home. He sends his love. I have been to D. on business, and travelled down with him.'

Belinda could not help saying to herself that Mr. Griffiths was very kind to have thought of her. His kindness gave her courage to meet his mother.

It was not very much that Belle had to do for Mrs. Griffiths; but whatever it was she accomplished well and thoroughly, as was her way. Whatever the girl put her hand to, she put her whole heart to at the same time. Her energy, sweetness, and good spirits cheered the sick woman and did her infinite good. Mrs. Griffiths took a great fancy to her, and liked to have her about her. Belle lunched with her the first day. She had better dine down

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below, Mrs. Griffiths said; and when dinner-time came the girl dressed herself, smoothed her yellow curls, and went shyly down the great staircase into the dining-room. It must be confessed that she glanced a little curiously at the table, wondering whether she was to dine alone or in company. This problem was soon solved; a side-door burst open, and Guy made his appearance, looking shy and ashamed of it as he came up and shook hands with her.

'Miss Belinda,' said he, 'will you allow me to dine with you?'

'You must do as you like,' said Belinda, quickly, starting back.

'Not at all,' said Mr. Griffiths. 'It is entirely as you shall decide. If you don't like my company, you need only say so. I shall not be offended. Well, shall we dine together?'

'Oh, certainly,' laughed Belinda, confused in her turn.

So the two sat down to dine together. For the first time in his life Guy thought the great room light enough and bright and comfortable. The gold and silver plate didn't seem to crush him, nor the draperies to suffocate, nor the great columns ready to fall upon him. There was Belinda picking her grapes and playing with the sugar-plums. He could hardly believe it possible. His poor old heart gave great wistful thumps (if such a thing is possible)

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at the sound of her voice. She had lost much of her shyness, and they were talking of anything that came into their heads. She had been telling him about Myrtle Cottage, and the spiders there, and looking up, laughing, she was surprised to see him staring at her very sadly and kindly. He turned away abruptly, and began to help himself to all sorts of things out of the silver dishes.

'It's very good of you,' Guy said, looking away, 'to come and brighten this dismal house, and to stay with a poor suffering woman and a great uncouth fellow like myself.'

'But you are both so very kind,' said Belinda, simply. 'I shall never forget——'

'Kind!' cried Guy, very roughly. 'I behaved like a brute to you and your father yesterday. I am not used to ladies' society. I am stupid and shy and awkward.'

'If you were very stupid,' said Belle, smiling, 'you would not have said that, Mr. Griffiths. Stupid people always think themselves charming.'

When Guy said good-night immediately after dinner as usual, he sighed, and looked at her again with such kind and melancholy eyes that Belle felt an odd affection and compassion for him. 'I never should have thought it possible to like him so much,' thought the girl, as she slowly went along the passage to Mrs. Griffiths' door.

It was an odd life this young creature led in the great silent stifling house, with uncouth Guy for her playfellow, the sick woman's complaints and fancies for her duty in

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life. The silence of it all, its very comfort and splendidness, oppressed Belinda more at times than a simpler and more busy life. But the garden was an endless pleasure and refreshment, and she used to stroll about, skim over the terraces and walks, smell the roses, feed the birds and the gold fishes. Sometimes I have stood at my window watching the active figure flitting by in and out under the trellis, fifteen times round the pond, thirty-two times along the terrace walk. Belle was obliged to set herself tasks, or she would have got tired sometimes of wandering about by herself. All this time she never thought of Guy except as a curious sort of companion; any thought of sentiment had never once occurred to her

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VI.

ONE day that Belle had been in the garden longer than usual, she remembered a note for Mrs. Griffiths that she had forgotten to write, and springing up the steps into the hall, on the way, with some roses in her apron, she suddenly almost ran up against Guy, who had come home earlier than usual. The girl stood blushing and looking more charming than ever. The young fellow stood quite still too, looking with such expressive and admiring glances that Belinda blushed deeper still, and made haste to escape to her room. Presently the gong sounded, and there was no help for it, and she had to go down again. Guy was in the dining-room as polite and as shy as usual, and Belinda gradually forgot the passing impression. The butler put the dessert on the table and left them, and when she had finished her fruit Belinda got up to say good-by. As she was leaving the room she heard Guy's footsteps following. She stopped short. He came up to her. He looked very pale, and said suddenly in a quick, husky voice, 'Belle, will you marry me?' Poor Belinda opened her grey eyes full in his face. She could hardly

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believe she had heard aright. She was startled, taken aback, but she followed her impulse of the moment, and answered gravely, 'No, Guy.'

He wasn't angry or surprised. He had known it all along, poor fellow, and expected nothing else. He only sighed, looked at her once again, and then went away out of the room.

Poor Belle! she stood there where he had left her,—the lights burnt, the great table glittered, the curtains waved. It was like a strange dream. She clasped her hands together, and then suddenly ran and fled away up to her own room,—frightened, utterly puzzled, bewildered, not knowing what to do or to whom to speak. It was a comfort to be summoned as usual to read to Mrs. Griffiths. She longed to pour out her story to the poor lady, but she dreaded agitating her. She read as she was bid. Once she stopped short, but her mistress impatiently motioned her to go on. She obeyed, stumbling and tumbling over the words before her, until there came a knock at the door, and, contrary to his custom, Guy entered the room. He looked very pale, poor fellow, and sad and subdued. 'I wanted to see you, Miss Belinda,' he said aloud, 'and to tell you that I hope this will make no difference, and that you will remain with us as if nothing had happened. You warned me, mamma, but I could not help myself. It's my own fault. Good-night. That is all I had to say.'

Belle turned wistfully to Mrs. Griffiths. The thin hand

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was impatiently twisting the coverlet. 'Of course—Who would have anything to say to him?—Foolish fellow,' she muttered in her indistinct way. 'Go on, Miss Barly.'

'Oh, but tell me first, ought I remain here?' Belle asked, imploringly.

'Certainly, unless you are unhappy with us,' the sick woman answered, peevishly. Mrs. Griffiths never made any other allusion to what had happened. I think the truth was that she did not care very much for anything outside the doors of her sick-room. Perhaps she thought her son had been over hasty, and that in time Belinda might change her mind. To people lying on their last sick beds, the terrors, anxieties, longings of life seem very curious and strange. They seem to forget that they were once anxious, hopeful, eager themselves, as they lie gazing at the awful veil which will soon be withdrawn from before their fading eyes.

A sort of constraint came between Guy and Belinda at first, but it wore away by degrees. He often alluded to his proposal, but in so hopeless and gentle a way that she could not be angry; still she was disquieted and unhappy. She felt that it was a false and awkward position. She could not bear to see him looking ill and sad, as he did at times, with great black rings under his dark eyes. It was worse still when she saw him brighten up with happiness at some chance word she let fall now and then—speaking inadvertently of his house as 'home,' or of the roses next year.

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He must not mistake her. She could not bear to pain him by hard words, and yet sometimes she felt it was her duty to speak them. One day she met him in the street, on her way back to the house. The roll of the passing carriage-wheels gave Guy confidence, and, walking by her side, he began to say, 'Now I never know what delightful surprise may not be waiting for me at every street corner. Ah, Miss Belle, my whole life might be one long dream of wonder and happiness, if . . . .' 'Don't speak like this ever again, or I shall have to go away,' said Belle, interrupting, and crossing the road, in her agitation, under the very noses of two omnibus horses. 'I wish I could like you enough to marry you. I shall always love you enough to be your friend; please don't talk of anything else.' Belle said this in a bright brisk imploring decided tone, and hoped to have put an end to the matter. That day she came to me and told her little story. There were almost as many reasons for her staying as for her leaving, the poor child thought. I could not advise her to go, for the assistance that she was able to send home was very valuable. (Guy laughed, and utterly refused to accept a sixpence of her salary.) Mrs. Griffiths evidently wanted her; Guy, poor fellow, would have given all he had to keep her, as we all knew too well.

Circumstance orders events sometimes, and people themselves, with all their powers and knowledge of good and of evil, are but passive instruments in the hands of fate.

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News came that Mr. Barly was ill; and little Belinda, with anxious face, and a note in her trembling hand, came into Mrs. Griffiths' room one day to say she must go to him directly. 'Your father is ill,' wrote Anna. 'Les convenances demand your immediate return to him.' Guy happened to be present, and when Belle left the room he followed her out into the passage.

'You are going?' he said.

'I don't know what Anna means by "les convenances," but papa is ill, and wants me,' said Belinda—almost crying.

'And I want you,' said Guy; 'but that don't matter, of course. Go—go, since you wish it.'

After all, perhaps it was well she was going, thought Belle, as she went to pack up her boxes. Poor Guy's sad face haunted her. She seemed to carry it away in her box with her other possessions.

It would be difficult to describe what he felt, poor fellow, when he came upon the luggage standing ready corded in the hall, and he found that Belle had taken him at his word. He was so silent a man, so self-contained, so diffident of his own strength to win her love in time, so unused to the ways of the world and of women, that he could be judged by no ordinary rule. His utter despair and bewilderment would have been laughable almost, if they had not been so genuine. He paced about the garden with hasty uncertain footsteps, muttering to himself as he

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went along, and angrily cutting at the rose-hedges. 'Of course she must go, since she wished it;—of course she must—of course, of course. What would the house be like when she was gone?' For an instant a vision of a great dull vault without warmth, or light, or colour, or possible comfort anywhere, rose before him. He tried to imagine what his life would be if she never came back into it; but as he stood still trying to seize the picture, it seemed to him that it was a thing not to be imagined or thought of. Wherever he looked he saw her, everywhere and in everything. He had imagined himself unhappy; now he discovered that for the last few weeks, since little Belinda had come, he had basked in the summer she had brought, and found new life in the sunshine of her presence. Of an evening he had come home eagerly from his daily toil looking to find her. When he left early in the morning he would look up with kind eyes at her windows as he drove away. Once, early one morning, he had passed her near the lodge-gate, standing in the shadow of the great aspen-tree, and making way for the horses to go by. Belle was holding back the clean stiff folds of her pink muslin dress; she looked up with that peculiar blink of her grey eyes, smiled, and nodded her bright head, and shrunk away from the horses. Every morning Guy used to look under the tree after that to see if she were there by chance, even if he had parted from her but a minute before. Good stupid old fellow! he used to smile to

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himself at his own foolishness. One of his fancies about her was that Belinda was a bird who would fly away some day, and perch up in the branches of one of the great trees, far, far beyond his reach. And now was this fancy coming true? was she going—leaving him—flying away where he could not follow her? He gave an inarticulate sound of mingled anger and sorrow and tenderness, which relieved his heart, but which puzzled Belle herself, who was coming down the garden walk to meet him.

'I was looking for you, Mr. Griffiths,' said Belle. 'Your mother wants to speak to you. I, too, wanted to ask you something,' the girl went on, blushing. 'She is kind enough to wish me to come back. . . But——'

Belle stopped short, blushed up, and began pulling at the leaves sprouting on either side of the narrow alley. When she looked up after a minute, with one of her quick short-sighted glances, she found that Guy's two little brown eyes were fixed upon her steadily.

'Don't be afraid that I shall trouble you,' he said, reddening. 'If you knew—if you had the smallest conception what your presence is to me, you would come back. I think you would.'

Miss Barly didn't answer, but blushed up again and walked on in silence, hanging her head to conceal the two bright tears which had come into her eyes. She was so sorry, so very sorry. But what could she do? Guy had walked on to the end of the rose-garden, and Belle had

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followed. Now, instead of turning towards the house, he had come out into the bright-looking kitchen-garden, with its red brick walls hung with their various draperies of lichen and mosses, and garlands of clambering fruit. Four little paths led up to the turf carpet which had been laid down in the centre of the garden: here a fountain plashed with a tranquil fall of waters upon water; all sorts of sweet kitchen-herbs, mint and thyme and parsley, were growing along the straight-cut beds. Birds were pecking at the nets along the walls; one little sparrow that had been drinking at the fountain flew away as they approached. The few bright-coloured straggling flowers caught the sunlight and reflected it in sparks like the water.

The master of this pleasant place put out his great clumsy hand, and took hold of Belle's soft reluctant fingers. 'Ah, Belle,' he said, 'is there no hope for me? Will there never be any chance?'

'I wish with all my heart there was a chance,' said poor Belle, pulling away her hand impatiently. 'Why do you wound and pain me by speaking again and again of what is far best forgotten? Dear Mr. Griffiths, I will marry you to-morrow, if you desire it,' said the girl, with a sudden impulse, turning pale and remembering all that she owed to his forbearance and gentleness; 'but please, please don't ask it.' She looked so frightened and desperate that poor Guy felt that this was worse than anything, and sadly shook his head.

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'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'I don't want to marry you against your will, or keep you here. Yes, you shall go home, and I will stop here alone, and cut my throat if I find I cannot bear the place without you. I am only joking. I daresay I shall do very well,' said Griffiths with a sigh; and he turned away and began stamping off in his clumsy way. Then he suddenly stopped and looked back. Belle was standing in the sunshine with her face hidden in her hands. She was so puzzled, and sorry, and hopeless, and mournful. The only thing she could do was to cry, poor child!—and by some instinct Griffiths guessed that she was crying; he knew it,—his heart melted with pity. The poor fellow came back trembling. 'My dearest,' he said, 'don't cry. What a brute I am to make you cry. Tell me anything in the whole world I can do to make you happy.'

'If I could only do anything for you,' said Belle, 'that would make me happier.'

'Then come back, my dear,' said Guy, 'and don't fly away yet for ever, as you threatened just now. Come back and cheer up my mother, and make tea and a little sunshine for me, until—until some confounded fellow comes and carries you off,' said poor Griffiths.

'Oh, that will never be. Yes; I'll come,' said Belle, earnestly. 'I'll go home for a week and come back; indeed I will.'

'Only let me know,' said Mr. Griffiths, 'and my

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mother will send the carriage for you. Shall we say a week?' he added, anxious to drive a hard bargain.

'Yes,' said Belinda, smiling; 'I'll write and tell you the day.'

Nothing would induce Griffiths to order the carriage until after dinner, and it was quite late at night when Belle got home.

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VII.

Poor little Myrtle Cottage looked very small and shabby as she drove up in the darkness to the door. A brilliant illumination streamed from all the windows. Martha rubbed her elbows at the sight of the gorgeous equipage. Fanny came to the door surprised, laughing, giggling, mysterious. Everything looked much as usual, except that a large and pompous-looking gentleman was sitting on the drawing-room sofa, and beside him Anna, with a huge ring on her fourth finger, attempting to blush as Belle came into the room. Belle saw that she was not wanted, and ran upstairs to her father, who was better, and sitting in the arm-chair by his bedside. The poor old man nearly cried with delight and surprise, held out both his shaking hands to her, and clung tenderly to the bright young daughter. Belle sat beside him, holding his hand, asking him a hundred questions, kissing his wrinkled face and cheeks, and telling him all that had happened. Mr. Barly, too, had news to give. The fat gentleman downstairs, he told Belle, was no other than Anna's old admirer, the doctor, of whom mention has

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been made. He had re-proposed the day before, and was now sitting on the sofa on probation. Fanny's prospects, too, seemed satisfactory. 'She assures me,' said Mr. Barly, 'that young Ogden is on the point of coming forward. An old man like me, my dear, is naturally anxious to see his children settled in life and comfortably provided for. I don't know who would be good enough for my Belinda. Not that awkward lout of a Griffiths. No, no; we must look out for better than that.'

'Oh, papa, if you knew how good and how kind he is!' said Belle, with a sudden revulsion of feeling; but she broke off abruptly, and spoke of something else.

The other maid, who had already gone to bed the night before when Belle arrived at the cottage, gave a loud shriek when she went into the room next morning and found some one asleep in the bed. Belle awoke, laughed and explained, and asked her to bring up her things.

'Bring 'em hup?' said the girl. 'What, all them 'ampers that's come by the cart? No, miss, that's more than me and Martha have the strength for. I should crick my back if I were to attempt for to do such a thing.'

'Hampers—what hampers?' Belle asked; but when she went down she found the little passage piled with cases, flowers and game and preserves, and some fine old port for Mr. Barly, and some roses for Belle. As Belinda

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came downstairs, in her fresh morning dress, Anna, who had been poking about and examining the various packages, looked up with offended dignity.

'I think, considering that I am mistress here,' said she, 'these hampers should have been directed to me, instead of to you, Belinda. Mr. Griffiths strangely forgets. Indeed, I fear that you too are wanting in any great sense of ladylike propriety.'

'Prunes, prism, propriety,' said Belle, gaily. 'Never mind, dear Anna; he's sent the things for all of us. Mr. Griffiths certainly never meant me to drink two dozen bottles of port wine in a week.'

'You are evading the question,' said Anna. 'I have been wishing to talk to you for some time past,—come into the dining-room, if you please.'

It seems almost impossible to believe, and yet I cannot help fearing that out of sheer spite and envy Anna Barly had even then determined that if she could prevent it, Belinda should never go back to Castle Gardens again, but remain in the cottage. The sight of the pretty things which had been given her there, all the evidences which told of the esteem and love in which she was held, maddened the foolish woman. I can give no other reason for the way in which she opposed Belinda's return to Mrs. Griffiths. 'Her duty is at home,' said Anna. 'I myself shall be greatly engaged with Thomas'—so she had

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already learnt to call Dr. Robinson. 'Fanny also is pre-occupied; Belinda must remain.'

When Belle demurred and said that for the next few weeks she would like to return as she had promised, and stay until Mrs. Griffiths was suited with another companion, Anna's indignation rose and overpowered her dignity. Was it *her* sister who was so oblivious of the laws of society, propriety, modesty? Anna feared that Belinda had not reflected upon the strange appearance her conduct must have to others, to the Ogdens, to them all. What was the secret attraction which took her back? Anna said she had rather not enquire, and went on with her oration. Unmaidenly,—not to be thought of,—the advice of those whose experience might be trusted'—does one not know the rigmarole by heart? When even the father, who had been previously talked to, sided with his eldest daughter; when Thomas, who was also called into the family conclave, nodded his head in an ominous manner, poor little Belinda, frightened, shaken, undecided, almost promised that she would do as they desired; and as she promised, the thought of poor Guy's grief and wistful haggard face came before her, and her poor little heart ached and sank at the thought. But not even Belinda, with all her courage, could resist the decision of so much experience, or Anna's hints and innuendoes, or, more insurmountable than all the rest, a sudden shyness

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and consciousness which had come over the poor little maiden, who turned crimson with shame and annoyance.

Belinda had decided as she was told—had done as her conscience bid her,—and yet there was but little satisfaction in this duty accomplished. For about half an hour she went about feeling like a heroine, and then, without any reason or occasion, it seemed to her that the mask had come off her face, that she had discovered herself to be a traitoress, that she had betrayed and abandoned her kindest friends; she called herself a selfish, ungrateful wretch, she wondered what Guy would think of her; she was out of temper, out of spirits, out of patience with herself, and the click of the blind swinging in the draft was unendurable. The complacent expression of Anna's handsome face put her teeth on edge. When Fanny tumbled over the footstool with a playful shriek, to everybody's surprise Belinda burst out crying.

Those few days were endless, slow, dull, unbearable—every second brought its pang of regret and discomfort and remorse. It seemed to Belinda that her ears listened, her mouth talked, her eyes looked at the four walls of the Cottage, at the furze on the common, at the faces of her sisters, with a sort of mechanical effort. As if she were acting her daily life, not living it naturally and without effort. Only when she was with her father did she feel unconstrained; but even then there was an unexpressed reproach in her heart like a dull pain that she could not

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quiet. And so the long days lagged. Although Dr. Robinson enlivened them with his presence, and the Ogdens drove up to carry Fanny off to the happy regions of Capulet Square (E. for Elysium Anna I think would have docketed the district), to Belinda those days seemed slow, and dark and dim, and almost hopeless at times.

On the day on which Belinda was to have returned, there came a letter to me telling her story plainly enough:—'I must not come back, my dearest Miss Williamson,' she wrote. 'I am going to write to Mrs. Griffiths and dear kind Mr. Guy to-morrow to tell them so. Anna does not think it is right. Papa clings to me and wants me, now that both my sisters are going to leave him. How often I shall think of you all—of all your goodness to me, of the beautiful roses, and my dear little room! Do you think Mr. Guy would let me take one or two books as a remembrance—Hume's *History of England*, Porteous's *Sermons*, and *Essays on Reform?* I should like to have something to remind me of you all, and to look at sometimes, since they say I am not to see you all again. Good-by, and thank you and Mrs. H. a thousand thousand times.—Your ever, ever affectionate BELINDA. P.S.—Might I also ask for that little green volume of the *Golden Treasury* which is up in the tower-room?'

This was what Guy had feared all along. Once she was gone, he knew by instinct she would never come back. I hardly know how it fared with the poor fellow all this

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time. He kept out of our way, and would try to escape me, but once by chance I met him, and I was shocked by the change which had come over him. I had my own opinion, as we all have at times. H. and I had talked it over,—for old women are good for something after all, and can sometimes play a sentimental part in life as well as young ones. It seemed to us impossible that Belinda should not relent to so much goodness and unselfishness, and come back again some day never to go any more. We knew enough of Anna Barly to guess the part *she* had played, nor did we despair of seeing Belinda among us once more. But someone must help her, she could not reach us unassisted; and so I told Mrs. Griffiths, who had remarked upon her son's distress and altered looks.

'If you will lend us the carriage,' I said, 'either H. or I will go over to Dumbleton to-morrow, and I doubt not that we shall bring her.' H. went. She told me about it afterwards. Anna was fortunately absent. Mr. Barly was downstairs, and H. was able to talk to him a little bit before Belinda came down. The poor old man always thought as he was told to think, and since his illness he was more uncertain and broken than ever. He was dismayed when H. told him in her decided way that he was probably sacrificing two people's happiness for life by his ill-timed interference. When at last Belinda came down, she looked almost as ill as Griffiths himself. She rushed into H.'s arms with a scream of delight, and

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eagerly asked a hundred questions. 'How were they all—what were they all doing?'

H. was very decided. Everybody was very ill and wanted Belinda back. 'Your father says he can spare you very well,' said she. 'Why not come back with me this afternoon, if only for a time? It is your duty,' H. continued, in her dry way. 'You should not leave them in this uncertainty.' 'Go, my child—pray go,' urged Mr. Barly. And at last Belinda consented shyly, nothing loth.

H. began to question her when she had got her safe in the carriage. Belinda said she had not been well. She could not sleep, she said. She had had bad dreams. She blushed, and confessed that she had dreamt of Guy lying dead in the kitchen-garden. She had gone about the house trying, indeed she had tried to be cheerful and busy as usual, but she felt unhappy, ungrateful. 'Oh, what a foolish girl I am,' she said. All the lights were burning in the little town, the west was glowing and reflected in the river, the boats trembled and shot through the shiny waters, and the people were out upon the banks, as they crossed the bridge again on their way from Dumbleton. Belle was happier, certainly, but crying from agitation.

'Have I made him miserable, poor fellow? Oh, I think I shall blame myself all my life,' said she, covering her face with her hands. 'Oh, H.! H.! what shall I do?'

H. dryly replied that she must be guided by circum-

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stances, and when they reached Castle Gardens, kissed her and set her down at the great gate, while she herself went home in the carriage.

It was all twilight by this time among the roses. Belinda met the gate-keeper, who touched his hat and told her his master was in the garden; and so instead of going into the house she flitted away towards the garden, crossed the lawns, and went in and out among the bowers and trellises looking for him—frightened by her own temerity at first, gaining courage by degrees. It was so still, so sweet, so dark; the stars were coming out in the evening sky, a meteor went flashing from east to west, a bat flew across her path; all the scent hung heavy in the air. Twice Belinda called out timidly, 'Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Griffiths!' but no one answered. Then she remembered her dream in sudden terror, and hurried into the kitchen-garden to the fountain where they had parted.

What had happened? Someone was lying on the grass. Was this her dream? was it Guy? was he dead? had she killed him? Belinda ran up to him, seized his hand, and called him Guy—dear Guy; and Guy, who had fallen asleep from very weariness and sadness of heart, opened his eyes to hear himself called by the voice he loved best in the world; while the sweetest eyes, full of tender tears, were gazing anxiously into his ugly face. Ugly? Fairy tales have told us this at least, that ugliness and dulness do not exist for those who truly love.

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Had she ever thought him rough uncouth, unlovable? Ah! she had been blind in those days; she knew better now. As they walked back through the twilight garden that night, Guy said, humbly,—'I shan't do you any credit, Belinda; I can only love you.'

'*Only!*' said Belinda.

She didn't finish her sentence; but he understood very well what she meant.

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LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

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LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD.

I.

THERE is something sad in most pretty stories, in most lovely strains, in the tenderest affections and friendships; but tragedy is a different thing from the indefinable feeling which lifts us beyond to-day into that dear and happy region where our dearest loves, and plays, and dreams, are to be found even in childish times. Poor little Red Riding Hood, with bright eyes glancing from her scarlet caplet, has been mourned by generations of children; but though they pity her, and lament her sad fate, she is no familiar playmate and companion. That terrible wolf with the fiery eyes, glaring through the brushwood, haunts them from the very beginning of the story;—it is too sad, too horrible, and they hastily turn the leaves and fly to other and better loved companions, with whose troubles they sympathise, for they are but passing woes, and they know that brighter times are in

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store. For the poor little maiden at the well, for dear Cinderella, for Roe-brother and little sister, wandering through the glades of the forest, and Snowwhite and her sylvan court of kindly woodland dwarfs. All these belong to the sweet and gentle region where beautiful calm suns shine after the storm, amid fair landscapes, and gardens, and palaces. Even we elders sympathise with the children in this feeling, although we are more or less hardened by time, and have ourselves, wandering in the midway of life, met with wolves roving through the forest; wolves from whose cruel claws, alas! no father's or mother's love can protect us, and against whose wiles all warnings except those of our own experience are vain. And these wolves devour little boys as well as little girls and pats of butter.

This is no place to write of some stories, so sad and so hopeless that they can scarcely be spoken; although good old Perrault, in his simple way, to some poor Red Riding Hoods straying from the path, utters a word of warning rhyme at the end of the old French edition:—some stories are too sad, others too trifling. The sketch which I have in my mind is no terrible tragedy, but a silly little tale, so foolish and trivial that if it were not that it comes in its place with the others, I should scarcely attempt to repeat it. I met all the personages by chance at Fontainebleau only the other day.

The wolf was playing the fiddle under Little Red Riding Hood's window. Little Red Riding Hood was

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peeping from behind her cotton curtains. Rémy (that was the wolf's Christian name) could see the little balls bobbing, and guessed that she was there. He played on louder than ever, dragging his bow with long sobbing chords across his fiddle-strings, and as he played, a fairy palace arose at his bidding, more beautiful than the real old palace across the Place that we had come to see. The fairy palace arose story upon story, lovely to look upon, enchanted; a palace of art, with galleries, and terraces, and belvederes, and orange-flowers scenting the air, and fragrant blossoms falling in snow-showers, and fountains of life murmuring and turning marble to gold as they flowed. Red Riding Hood from behind her cotton curtains, and Rémy, her cousin, outside in the courtyard, were the only two inhabitants of this wonderful building. They were alone in it together, far away in that world of which I have been speaking, at a long long distance from the everyday all round about them, though the cook of the hotel was standing at his kitchen-door, and the stable-boy was grinning at Rémy's elbow, and H. and I, who had arrived only that evening, were sitting resting on the bench in front of the hotel, among the autumnal profusion of nasturtiums and marigolds with which the courtyard was planted. H. and I had come to see the palace, and to walk about in the stately old gardens, and to breathe a little quiet and silence after the noise of the machines thundering all day in the Great Exhibition of

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the Champ de Mars, the din of the cannons firing, of the carriages and multitudes rolling along the streets.

The Maynards, Red Riding Hood's parents, were not passers-by like ourselves, they were comfortably installed at the hotel for a month at a time, and came over once a year to see Mrs. Maynard's mother, an old lady who had lived at Fontainebleau as long as her two daughters could remember. This old lady's name was Madame Capuchon; but her first husband had been an Englishman, like Mr. Maynard, her son-in-law, who was also her nephew by this first marriage. Both Madame Capuchon's daughters were married,—Marthe, the eldest, to Henry Maynard, an English country gentleman; Félicie, the youngest, to the Baron de la Louvière, who resided at Poictiers, and who was sous-préfet there.

It is now nearly forty years since Madame Capuchon first went to live at Fontainebleau, in the old house at the corner of the Rue de la Lampe. It has long been doomed to destruction, with its picturesque high roof, its narrow windows and balconies, and sunny old brick passages and staircases, with the round ivy œil-de-bœuf windows. Staircases were piled up of brick in the time of the Lewises, broad and wide, and easy to climb, and not of polished wood, like the slippery flights of to-day. However, the old house is in the way of a row of shops and a projected café and newspaper-office, so are the ivy-grown garden-walls, the acacia-trees, the sun-dial, and the old stone

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seat. It is a pity that newer buildings cannot sometimes be selected for destruction; they might be rebuilt and re-destroyed again and again, and people who care for such things might be left in peace a little longer to hold the dear old homes and traditions of their youth.

Madame Capuchon, however, is a kind and despotic old lady; she has great influence and authority in the town, and during her life the old house is safe. It is now, as I have said, forty years since she first came to live there,—a young widow for the second time, with two little daughters and a faithful old maid to be her only companions in her flight from the world, where she had known great troubles and changes. Madame Capuchon and her children inhabited the two upper stories of the old house. The rez de chaussée was partly a porter's lodge, partly a warehouse, and partly a little apartment which the proprietor reserved for his use. He died twice during Madame Capuchon's tenancy; once he ventured to propose to her—but this was the former owner of the place, not the present proprietor, an old bachelor who preferred his Paris café and his boulevard to the stately silence and basking life of Fontainebleau.

This life suited Madame Capuchon, who from sorrow at first, and then from habit, continued the same silent cloistered existence for years—years which went by and separated her quietly but completely from her old habits and friends and connections and long-past troubles, while

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the little girls grew up and the mother's beauty changed, faded quietly away in the twilight life she was leading.

The proprietor who had ventured to propose to the widow, and who had been refused with so much grace and decision that his admiration remained unaltered, was no more; but shortly before his death he had a second time accosted her with negotiations of marriage: not for himself this time, but for a nephew of his, the Baron de la Louvière, who had seen the young ladies by chance, heard much good of them from his uncle and their attached attendant Simonne, and learnt that their dot was ample and their connections respectable. Marthe, the eldest daughter, was the least good-looking of the two, but to most people's mind far more charming than Félicie, the second. M. de la Louvière had at first a slight preference for Marthe, but learning through his uncle that an alliance was contemplated between her and an English connection of her mother's, he announced himself equally anxious to obtain the hand of Félicie, the younger sister. After some hesitation, much addition of figures, subtraction, division, rule of three worked out, consultations and talk between Simonne and her mistress, and long discussions with Henry Maynard himself, who was staying with a friend at Fontainebleau at the time, this favour was accorded to the baron.

The young baroness went off nothing loth: she was bored at home, she did not like the habit of severity and

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silence into which her mother had fallen. She was a slim, active, decided person, of calm affections, but passionately fond of her own way, as indeed was Madame Capuchon herself, for all her regrets for that past in which it must be confessed she had always done exactly as she liked, and completely ruled her two husbands. For all Madame Capuchon's blacks and drabs and seclusion, and shut shutters, and confessors, and shakes of the head, she had greatly cheered up by this time: she had discovered in her health a delightful source of interest and amusement; Félicie's marriage was as good as a play, as the saying goes; and then came a catastrophe, still more exciting than Félicie's brilliant prospects, which occupied all the spare moments of the two years which succeeded the youngest girl's departure from home.

Madame Capuchon's nephew, Henry Maynard, was, as I have said, staying at Fontainebleau with a friend, who was unfortunately a very good-looking young man of very good family, who had come to Fontainebleau to be out of harm's way, and to read French for some diplomatic appointment. Maynard used to talk to him about his devotion for his pretty cousin Marthe with the soft trill in her voice and the sweet quick eyes. Young Lord John, alas, was easily converted to this creed,—he also took a desperate fancy to the pretty young lady; and Madame Capuchon, whose repeated losses had not destroyed a certain ambition which had always been in her nature, greatly

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encouraged the young man. And so one day poor Maynard was told that he must resign himself to his hard fate. He had never hoped much, for he knew well enough that his cousin, as he called her, did not care for him; Marthe had always discouraged him, although her mother would have scouted the notion that one of her daughters should resist any decree she might lay down, or venture to think for herself on such matters.

When Lord John proposed in the English fashion to Marthe one evening in the deep embrasure of the drawing-room window, Madame Capuchon was enchanted, although disapproving of the irregularity of the proceeding. She announced her intention of settling upon her eldest daughter a sum so large and so much out of the proportion to the dot which she had accorded to Madame de la Louvière, that the baron hearing of it by chance through Monsieur Micotton, the family solicitor, was furious, and an angry correspondence then commenced between him and his mother-in-law, which lasted many years, and in which Madame Capuchon found another fresh interest to attach her to life, and an unfailing vent for much of her spare energy and excitement.

Henry Maynard went back to his father's house at Littleton on Thames, to console himself as best he could among the punts and the water-lilies. Lord John went back to England to pass his examination, and to gain his family's consent, without which he said he could not

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marry; and Marthe waited in the old house with Simonne and her mother, and that was the end of her story.

Lord John didn't pass his examination; but interest was made for him, and he was given another chance, and he got the diplomatic appointment all the same, and he went to Russia and was heard of no more at Fontainebleau. Madame Capuchon was naturally surprised at his silence; while Marthe wondered and wearied, but spoke no word of the pain which consumed her. Her mother sat down and wrote to the duke, presented her compliments, begged to remind him of his son's engagement, and requested information of the young man's whereabouts and intentions. In the course of a week she received a few polite lines from the duchess, regretting that she could give Madame Capuchon no information as to Lord John's whereabouts or intentions, informing her that she had made some mistake as to his engagement, and begging to decline any further correspondence on the subject, on paper so thick that Simonne had to pay double postage for the epistle, and it would scarcely burn when Madame Capuchon flung it into the fire. The widow stamped her little foot, flashed her eyes, bit her lips, darted off her compliments to the duchess a second time, and begged to inform her that her son was a coward and a false gentleman, and that it was the Capuchon family that now begged to decline any further communication with people who held their word so cheaply. Naturally enough, no

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answer came to this, although Madame Capuchon expected one, and fumed and flashed and scolded for weeks after, during which poor Marthe still wondered and knew nothing.

'Don't let us tell her anything about it,' Simonne had said when the first letter came. 'Let her forget "tout doucement;"' and Madame Capuchon agreed.

And so Marthe waited and forgot 'tout doucement' as Simonne proposed, for fifteen years, and the swans came sailing past her when she took her daily walk, and the leaves fell and grew again, and every night the shadow of the old lamp swinging in the street outside cast its quaint lines and glimmer across her dark leaf-shaded room, and the trees rustled when the wind blew, and her dreams were quieter and less vivid.

Once Henry Maynard wrote soon after Lord John's desertion, renewing his proposals, to Marthe herself and not to his aunt; but the letter came too soon. And, indeed, it was by Henry Maynard's letter that Marthe first realised for certain what had happened.

But it came too soon. She could not yet bear to hear her faithless lover blamed. Lord John was a villain and unworthy of a regret, Henry said. Would she not consent to accept an honest man instead of a false one?

'No, no, no,—a hundred times no!' cried Marthe to herself, with something of her mother's spirit, and she nervously wrote her answer and slid out by herself and

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posted it. She never dared tell Madame Capuchon what she had done.

As time went on, one or two other 'offers' were made to her; but Marthe was so reluctant that, as they were not very good ones, Madame Capuchon let them go by; and then Marthe had a long illness, and then more time passed by.

'What have we been about?' said Madame Capuchon to her confidante one day as her daughter left the room. 'Here she is an old maid, and it is all her own obstinacy.'

At thirty-three Marthe was still unmarried: a gracious, faded woman, who had caught the trick of being sad; although she had no real trouble, and had almost forgotten Lord John. But she had caught the trick of being sad, as I say, of flitting aimlessly across the rooms, of remembering and remembering instead of living for to-day.

Madame Capuchon was quite cheerful by this time; besides her health, her angry correspondence, her confessor, her game of dominoes, and her talks with Simonne, she had many little interests to fill up spare gaps and distract her when M. de la Louvière's demands were too much for her temper. There was her comfortable hot and well-served little dinner to look forward to, her paper to read of a night, her chocolate in bed every morning, on a nice little tray with a pat of fresh butter and her nice little new roll from the English baker's. Madame was friande,

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and Simonne's delight was to cater for her. But none of these distractions quite sufficed to give an interest to poor Marthe's sad life. She was too old for the fun and excitement of youth, and too young for the little comforts, the resignations and satisfactions of age. Simonne, the good old fat woman, used to think of her as a little girl, and try to devise new treats for her as she had done when Félicie and Marthe were children. Marthe would kiss her old nurse gratefully, and think, with a regretful sigh, how it was that she could no longer be made happy by a bunch of flowers, a hot buttered cake, a new trimming to her apron: she would give the little cake away to the porter's grandchildren, put the flowers into water and leave them, fold up the apron, and, to Simonne, most terrible sign of all, forget it in the drawer. It was not natural, something must be done, thought the old woman.

The old woman thought and thought, and poked about, and one day, with her spectacles on her nose, deciphered a letter which was lying on Madame Capuchon's table; it was signed Henry Maynard, and announced the writer's arrival at Paris. Next day, when Simonne was frizzling her mistress's white curls (they had come out of their seclusion for some years past), she suddenly asked what had become of Monsieur Maynard, Madame's English nephew, who used to come so often before Mademoiselle Félicie was married.

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'What is that to you?' said the old lady. 'He is at Paris. I heard from him yesterday.'

'And why don't you ask him to come down and see you?' said Simonne, frizzling away at the crisp silver locks. 'It would cheer up Mademoiselle to have some one to talk to. *We* don't want anyone; we have had our day, you and I; but Mademoiselle, I confess I don't like to see her going on as she does.'

'Nor I!' said the old lady, sharply. 'She is no credit to me. One would almost think that she reproaches me for her existence, after all the sacrifices I have made.'

Simonne went on frizzling, without stopping to enquire what these sacrifices might be. 'I will order a fricandeau for to-morrow,' she said; 'Madame had better invite Monsieur to spend the day.'

'Simonne, you are an old fool!' said her mistress. 'I have already written to my nephew to invite him to my house.'

Maynard came and partook of the fricandeau, and went for a little walk with Marthe, and he had a long talk with his aunt and old Simonne in the evening, and went away quite late—past ten o'clock it was. Maynard did not go back to Paris that night, but slept at the hotel, and early next morning there came a note addressed to Marthe, in which the writer stated that he was still of the same mind in which he had been fifteen years before, and if she

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was of a different way of thinking, would she consent to accept him as her husband?

And so it came about that long after the first best hopes of her youth were over, Marthe consented to leave her own silent home for her husband's, a melancholy middle-aged bride, sad and frightened at the thought of the tempestuous world into which she was being cast adrift, and less able, at thirty-three than at twenty, to hold her own against the kindly domineering old mother, who was much taken with the idea of this marriage, and vowed that Marthe should go, and that no daughter of hers should die an old maid if she could help it. She had been married twice herself; once at least, if possible, she was determined that both her daughters should follow her example. Félicie's choice was not all that Madame Capuchon could have wished, as far as liberality and amiability of character were concerned; but Félicie herself was happy, and indeed—so Madame Capuchon had much reason to suspect—abetted her husband in his grasping and extortionate demands. 'And now Marthe's turn had come,' said Madame Capuchon, complacently, sitting up among her pillows, sipping her chocolate; 'she was the eldest, she should have married first; she had been a good and devoted daughter, she would make an excellent wife,' cried the valiant old lady.

When Marthe demurred, 'Go, my child, go in peace—only go, go, go! Simonne is quite able to take care of

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me: do you think I want the sacrifice of your life? For what should I keep you? Can you curl me, can you play at dominoes? You are much more necessary to your cousin than you are to me. He will be here directly—what a figure you have made of yourself. Simonne, come here, give a coup de peigne to Mademoiselle. There, I hear the bell, Henry will be waiting.'

'He does not mind waiting, mamma,' said Marthe, smiling sadly. 'He has waited fifteen years already.'

'So much the worse for you both,' cried the old lady, angrily. 'If I had only had my health, if my spirits had not been completely crushed in those days, I never would have given in to such ridiculous ideas.'

Ridiculous ideas! This was all the epitaph that was uttered by anyone of them over the grave where poor Marthe had buried with much pain and many tears the trouble of her early life. She herself had no other text for the wasted love of her youth. How angry she had been with her cousin Henry when he warned her once, how she had hated him when he asked her to marry him before, tacitly forcing upon her the fact of his friend's infidelity, and now it was to Maynard after all that she was going to be married. After all that had passed, all the varying fates, and loves, and hopes, and expectations of her life. A sudden alarm came over the poor woman—was she to leave it, this still life, and the old house, and the tranquil shade and silence—and for what? Ah, she

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could not go, she could not—she would stay where she was. Ah! why would they not leave her alone?

Marthe went up to her room and cried, and bathed her eyes and cried again, and dabbed more water to dry her tears; then she came quietly down the old brick stairs. She passed along the tiled gallery, her slim figure reflecting in the dim old looking-glass in the alcove at the end, with the cupids engraved upon its mouldy surface. She hesitated a moment, and then took courage and opened the dining-room door. There was nobody there. It was all empty, dim-panelled, orderly, with its narrow tall windows reflecting the green without, and the gables and chimney-stacks piling under the blue. He was in the drawing-room, then; she had hoped to find him here. Marthe sighed and then walked on across the polished floor, and so into the drawing-room. It was dimmer, more chill than the room in which their meals were served. Someone was standing waiting for her in one of the windows. Marthe remembered at that instant that it was Lord John's window, but she had little time for such reminiscences. A burly figure turned at her entrance, and Henry Maynard came to meet her, with one big hand out, and his broad good-natured face beaming.

'Well, Minnie,' said Henry Maynard, calling her by his old name for her, 'you see I am here again already.'

'Yes,' she answered, standing before him, and then

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they were both silent; these two middle-aged people waiting for the other to speak.

'How is your mother?' Maynard asked. 'I thought her very little changed, but you are not looking over well. However, time touches us all.'

Marthe drew herself up, with her eyes gleaming in her pale face, and then there was another silence. At last Marthe faltered out, gaining courage as she went on:

'I have been agitated, and a little disturbed. My mother is quite well, cousin Henry,' she said, and as she spoke her sad looks encountered Maynard's good-natured twinkling glance. She blushed suddenly like a girl of fifteen. 'You seem amused,' she said, with some annoyance.

'Yes, dear,' spoke Maynard, in his kind manly tones. 'I am amused that you and I, at our time of life, should be shilly-shallying and sentimentalising, like a couple of chits who have all their life before them, and don't care whether they know or not what is coming next. I want to know very much—for I have little time to lose—what do you and your mother think of my letter this morning?'

This was coming to the point very abruptly, Mademoiselle Capuchon thought.

'I am so taken by surprise,' Marthe faltered, retreating a step or two, and nervously twisting her apron round about her fingers. 'She wishes it. I—I hardly know. I have had so little time to . . . . '

'My dear Marthe,' said Maynard, impatiently, 'I am

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not a romantic young man. I can make no professions and speeches. You must take me as I am, if I suit you. I won't say that after you sent me away I have never thought of anybody but you during these past fifteen years. But we might have been very happy together all this long time, and yesterday, when I saw how hipped you were looking, I determined to try and bring you away with me from this dismal place into the fresh air of Littleton; that is, if you liked to come with me of your own free will, and not only because my aunt desires it.' And Henry Maynard drew a long breath, and put his hands in his pockets.

This honest little speech was like a revelation to Marthe. She had come down feeling like a victim, meaning graciously perhaps, in the end, to reward Maynard's constancy, taking it for granted that all this time he had never ceased being in love. She found that it was from old friendship and kindness alone that he had come to her again, not from sentiment; and yet this kindness and protection touched her more than any protestations of romantic affection.

'But—but—should you really like it?' she stammered, forgetting all her dreams, and coming to life, as it were, at that instant.

'Like it!' he said, with a smile. 'You don't know how fond I mean to be of you, if you will come with me, dear Marthe. You shall make me as happy as you like, and

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yourself into the bargain. I don't think you will be sorry for it, and indeed you don't seem to have been doing much good here, all by yourself. Well, is it to be Yes or No?' And once more Maynard held out the broad brown hand.

And Marthe said, 'Yes,' quite cheerfully, and put her hand into his.

Marthe got to know her future husband better in these five minutes than in all the thirty years which had gone before.

The Maynards are an old Catholic family, so there were no difficulties on the score of religion. The little chapel in the big church was lighted up, the confessor performed the service. Madame Capuchon did not go, but Simonne was there, in robes of splendour, and so were the De la Louvières. The baron and his mother-in-law had agreed to a temporary truce on this auspicious occasion. After the ceremony the new-married pair went back to a refection which the English baker and Simonne had concocted between them. The baron and baroness had brought their little son Rémy, to whom they were devoted, and he presented Marthe with a wedding present—a large porcelain vase, upon which was a painting of his mother's performance—in both his parents' name. Madame Capuchon brought out a lovely pearl and emerald necklace, which Félicie had coveted for years past.

'I must get it done up,' the old lady said; 'you won't

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want it immediately, Marthe, you shall have it the first time you come to see me. Do not delay too long,' added Madame Capuchon, with a confidential shake of her head, to her son-in-law Maynard, as Marthe went away to change her dress. 'You see my health is miserable. I am a perfect martyr. My doctor tells me my case is serious: not in so many words, but he assures me that he cannot find out what ails me; and when doctors say that, we all know what it means.'

Henry Maynard attempted to reassure Madame Capuchon, and to induce her to take a more hopeful view of her state; but she grew quite angry, and snapped him up so short with her immediate prospect of dissolution, that he desisted in his well-meant endeavours, and the old lady continued more complacently,—

'Do not be uneasy; if anything happens to me, Simonne will write directly to your address. Do not forget to leave it with her. And now go and fetch your wife, and let me have the pleasure of seeing her in her travelling dress.'

It was a kind old lady, but there was a want in her love—so it seemed to her son-in-law as he obeyed her behest.

Marthe had never quite known what real love was, he thought. Sentiment, yes, and too much of it, but not that best home-love—familiar, tender, unchanging. Her mother had not got it in her to give. Félicie de la Lou-

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vière was a hard and clear-headed woman; all her affection was for Rémy, her little boy. Maynard disliked her and the baron too, but they were all apparently very good friends.

Marthe came back to the salle to say good-by, looking like herself again, Maynard thought, as his bride, in her rippling trailing grey silks, entered the room, with Simonne's big bouquet of roses in her hand, and a pretty pink glow in her cheeks.

She was duly embraced by Félicie and her husband, and then she knelt down to ask for her mother's blessing. 'Bless you! bless you!' cried Madame Capuchon, affectionately pushing her away. 'There, you will disarrange yourself; take care, take care.' Simonne sprang to the rescue, and Marthe found herself all at once embraced, stuck with pins, shaken out, tucked in, flattened, folded, embraced again; the handkerchief with which she had ventured to wipe her tears was torn out of her hand, folded, smoothed, and replaced. 'Voilà!' said Simonne, with two last loud kisses, 'bon voyage; good luck go with you.' And Maynard following after, somewhat to his confusion, received a couple of like salutations.

Simonne's benediction followed Mrs. Maynard to England, where she went and took possession of her new home. The neighbours called; the drawing-room chintzes were renewed; Marthe Capuchon existed no longer; no one would have recognised the listless ghost flitting here

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and there, and gazing from the windows of the old house in the Rue de la Lampe, in the busy and practical mistress of Henry Maynard's home. She had gained in composure and spirits and happiness since she came to England. Her house was admirably administered; she wore handsome shining silk dresses and old lace; and she rustled and commanded as efficiently as if she had been married for years. Simonne threw up her hands with delight at the transformation, the first time she saw Marthe after her marriage. 'But you are a hundred times better-looking than Madame la Baronne,' said the old woman. 'This is how I like to see you.'

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II.

More years went by, and Simonne's benediction did not lose its virtue.

The chief new blessing and happiness of all those blessings and happinesses which Simonne had wished to Marthe Maynard was a blessing called Marthe Maynard, too; a little girl adored by her mother. Martha is considered a pretty name in French, and Maynard loved it for his wife's sake, and as time went on for her daughter's as well. He called her Patty, however, to distinguish the two. Far more than the happiness some people find in the early spring, in the voices of birds, the delight of the morning hours, the presence of this little thing brought to her mother, this bright, honest black and brown and white and coral maiden, with her sweet and wilful ways and gay shrill warble. Every year the gay voice became more clear and decided, the ways more pretty and more wilful. Mrs. Maynard used to devise pretty fanciful dresses for her Patty, and to tie bright ribbons in the child's crisp brown locks, and watch over her and pray for her from morning to night. Squire Maynard, who was a

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sensible man, used to be afraid lest so much affection should be bad for his little girl: he tried to be stern now and then, and certainly succeeded in frightening Patty on such occasions. The truth was he loved his wife tenderly, and thought that Patty made a slave of her mother at times. It was a happy bondage for them both. Marthe dreamt no more dreams now, and only entered that serene country of her youth by proxy, as it were, and to make plans for her Patty. The child grew up as the years went by, but if Marthe made plans for her they were very distant ones, and to the mother as impossible still as when Patty had been a little baby tumbling in her cradle. Even then Marthe had settled that Patty was not to wait for years as she had waited. What hero there was in the big world worthy of her darling, Mrs. Maynard did not know. The mother's heart sickened the first time she ever thought seriously of a vague possibility, of which the very notion filled her with alarm. She had a presentiment the first time that she ever saw him.

She was sitting alone in her bedroom, drowsily stitching in the sunlight of the pleasant bow-window, listening to the sound of the clippers at work upon the ivy-hedge close by, and to the distant chime from the clock-tower of the town across the river. Just below her window spread the lawn where her husband's beloved flower-beds were flushing—scarlet and twinkling violet, white and brilliant amber. In the field beyond the sloping lawn some

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children were pulling at the sweet wild summer garlands hanging in the hedges, and the Alderneys were crunching through the long damp grasses. Two pretty creatures had straggled downhill to the water-side, and were looking at their own brown eyes reflected in a chance clear pool in the margin of the river. For the carpet of green and meadow verdure was falling over and lapping and draggling in the water in a fringe of glistening leaves and insects and weeds. There were white creamy meadow-sweets, great beds of purple flowers, bronzed water docks arching and crisping their stately heads, weeds upspringing, golden slimy water-lilies floating upon their shining leaves. A water-rat was starting out of his hole, a dragon-fly floating along the bank. All this was at the foot of the sloping mead down by the bridge. It crossed the river to the little town of spires and red brick gables which had been built about two centuries ago, and all round about spread hills and lawns and summer corn-fields. Marthe Maynard had seen the corn-fields ripen year after year: she loved the place for its own sake and for the sake of those who were very dear to her then; but to-day, as she looked, she suddenly realised, poor soul, that a time might come when the heart and the sweetest life of this little home-Eden might go from it. And as she looked through her window, something like a chill came over her: she dropped her work into her lap, and sat watching two figures climbing up the field side by side; coming through

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the buttercups, disappearing behind the hedge, reappearing at the bottom of the lawn, and then one figure darted forwards, while the other lingered a little among the flower-beds; and Mrs. Maynard got up resolutely, with a pain and odd apprehension in her heart, and went down to meet her daughter. The steeples of the little town which strike the hours, half-hours, and the very minutes as they pass, were striking four quarters, and then five again, as Mrs. Maynard came out upon her lawn, and at each stroke the poor mother's heart sank, and she turned a little sick at the possibility which had first occurred to her just now in her own room. It seemed to thrust itself again upon her as she stood waiting for the two young people—her own Patty and the strange young man coming through the flower-beds.

There was a certain likeness to herself, odd, touching, bewildering, in the utter stranger, which said more plainly than any words, I belong to and yours; I am no stranger, though strange to you. Patty had no need to explain, all breathless and excited and blushing. 'Mamma, do you know who this is? This is Rémy de la Louvière. Papa and I found him at the hotel;' for the poor mother had already guessed that this was her sister's son.

She could not help it. Her greeting was so stiff, her grasp so timid and fluttering, her words so guarded, that M. Rémy, who was used to be cordially welcomed and made much of, was surprised and disappointed, though he

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said nothing to show it. His manner froze, his moustaches seemed to curl more stiffly. He had expected to like his aunt from her letters and from what he had seen of her daughter, and here she was just the same as anybody else after all!

Rémy introduced himself all the same. He had come to make acquaintance with his English relations, he told Mrs. Maynard. His mother 'sent her love, and would they be kind to him?' and Marthe, for all her presentiments, could not but relent towards the handsome young fellow; she did not, however, ask him to stay, but this precaution was needless, for her husband had done so already. 'We heard him asking for us at the inn,' explained Patty. 'Mamma, was not it fortunate? Papa was talking about the old brown mare, and I was just walking with Don in the courtyard, and then I heard my cousin saying, 'Where is Sunnymede?' and I said, 'Oh, how delightful!'

'Hush, darling,' said her mother. 'Go and tell them to bring us some tea on the lawn.'

There was a shady corner not too far from the geraniums, where the table was set, and Rémy liked his aunt a little better, as she attended to his wants, making a gentle clatter among the white cups, and serving out cream strawberries with liberal hand, unlike anything he was used to at home. Mr. Maynard came in, hot, grizzled, and tired, and sank into a garden-chair; his wife's face bright-

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ened as he nodded to her; the distant river was flashing and dazzling. Rémy, with his long nose and bright eyes, sat watching the little home scene, and envying them somewhat the harmony and plenty. There was love in his home, it is true, and food too, but niggardly dealt out and only produced on occasions. If this was English life, Rémy thought it was very pleasant, and as he thought so he saw the bright and splendid little figure of his cousin Patty advancing radiant across the lawn. For once Mrs. Maynard was almost angry with her daughter for looking so lovely; her shrill sweet voice clamoured for attention; her bright head went bobbing over the cake and the strawberries; her bright cheeks were glowing; her eyes seemed to dance, shine, speak, go to sleep, and wake again with a flash. Mrs. Maynard had tied a bright ribbon in her daughter's hair that morning. She wore a white dress like her mother, but all fancifully and prettily cut. As he looked at her, the young man thought at first—unworthy simile—of coffee and cream and strawberries, in a dazzle of sunlight; then he thought of a gipsy, and then of a nymph, shining, transfigured: a wood-nymph escaped from her tree in the forest, for a time consorting with mortals, and eating and joining in their sports, before she fled back to the ivy-grown trunk, which was her home perhaps.

Rémy had not lived all these years in the narrow home school in which he had been bred without learning some-

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thing of the lesson which was taught there: taught in the whole manner and being of the household, of its incomings and outgoings, of its interests and selfish preoccupations. We are all sensible, coming from outside into strange homes, of the different spirit or lares penates pervading each household. As surely as every tree in the forest has its sylph, so every house in the city must own its domestic deity—different in aspect and character, but ruling with irresistible decision—orderly and decorous, disorderly; patient, impatient; some stint and mean in contrivances and economies, others profuse and neglectful; others, again, poor, plain of necessity, but kindly and liberal. Some spirits keep the doors of their homes wide open, others ajar, others under lock and key, bolted, barred, with a little cautious peephole to reconnoitre from. As a rule, the very wide open door often invites you to an indifferent entertainment going on within; and people who are particular generally prefer those houses where the door is left, let us say, on the latch.

The household god that Rémy had been brought up to worship was a mean, self-seeking, cautious, and economical spirit. Madame de la Louvière's object and ambition in life had been to bring her servants down to the well-known straw a day; to persuade her husband (no difficult matter) to grasp at every chance and shadow of advantage along his path; to educate her son to believe in the creed which she professed. Rémy must make a good marriage,

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must keep up with desirable acquaintances; must not neglect his well-to-do uncle, the La Louvière in Burgundy; must occasionally visit his grandmother, Madame Capuchon, whose savings ought to be something considerable by this time. Madame de la Louvière had no idea how considerable these savings were until one day about a week before Rémy made his appearance at Littleton, when the family lawyer, Monsieur Micotton, had come over to see her on business. This grasping clear-headed woman exercised a strange authority and fascination over the stupid little attorney,—he did her business cheaper than for any other client; he told her all sorts of secrets he had no right to communicate,—and now he let out to her that her mother had been making her will, and had left everything that she had laid by, in trust for little Marthe Maynard, her elder daughter's only child.

Madame de la Louvière's face pinched and wrinkled up into a sort of struggling knot of horror, severity, and indignation.

'My good Monsieur Micotton, what news you give me! What a culpable partiality! What an injustice! what a horror! Ah, that little intriguing English girl! Did you not remonstrate with, implore, my unfortunate mother? But it must not be allowed. We must interfere.'

'Madame,' said Micotton, respectfully, 'your mother is, as you well know, a person of singular decision and

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promptness of character. She explained to me that when your sister married, her husband (who apparently is rich) refused to accept more than a portion of the dot which came by right to madame your sister. M. de la Louvière unfortunately at that moment requested some advance, which apparently vexed madame your mother, and——'

'Ah, I understand. It was a plot; it was a conspiracy. I see it all,' hissed the angry lady. 'Ah, Monsieur Micotton, what a life of anxiety is that of a mother, devoted as I have been, wounded cruelly to the heart; to every hour insulted, trampled on!'

Madame de la Louvière was getting quite wild in her retrospect; and M. Micotton, fearing a nervous attack, hastily gathered his papers together, stuffed them into his shabby bag, and making a great many little parting bows, that were intended to soothe and calm down his angry client, retreated towards the door. As he left he ran up against a tall, broad-shouldered, good-looking young man, with a long nose, quick dark eyes, and a close-cropped dark beard, thick and soft and bright. Rémy had a look of his mother, who was a tall, straight, well-built woman; but his forehead was broader, his face softer, and his smile was charming. It was like the smile of his unknown aunt, far away in England, the enemy who had, according to his mother's account, defrauded and robbed him of his rights.

'My son, my poor child!' said the baroness, excitedly, 'be calm, come and help me to unravel this plot.'

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'What is the matter?' Rémy asked, in a cheerful voice. He, however, shrugged his shoulders rather dolefully when he heard the news, for to tell the truth he was in debt, and had been counting upon his grandmother's legacy to help him out. 'Hadn't we better make sure of her intentions before we remonstrate?' he suggested, and the baron was accordingly sent for and desired to copy out another of those long letters of his wife's devising, which he signed with a flourish at the end.

Madame Capuchon appealed to, refused to give any information as to the final disposition of her property. She should leave it to anybody she liked. She thought, considering her state of health, that the baron might have waited in patience until she was gone, to satisfy his curiosity. She sent her love to her grandson, but was much displeased with both his parents.

This was a terrible climax. Madame de la Louvière lay awake all one night. Next morning she sent for Rémy and unfolded her plans to him.

'You must go over to England and marry your cousin,' she said decisively; 'that is the only thing to be done.'

When Micotton came next day for further orders, Madame de la Louvière told him that Rémy was already gone.

All his life long Rémy remembered this evening upon

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the river, sweeter, more balmy and wonderful than almost any evening he had ever spent in his life before. He had come with a set purpose, this wolf in sheep's clothing, to perform his part in a bargain, without thought of anything but his own advantage. The idea of any objection being made never occurred to him. He was used to be made much of, as I have said; he could please where he chose. This project accorded so entirely with his French ideas, and seemed so natural and simple an arrangement, that he never thought of doubting its success. For the first time now a possibility occurred to him of something higher, wiser, holier, than money getting and grasping, in his schemes for the future and for his married life. He scarcely owned it to himself, but now that he had seen his cousin, he unconsciously realised that if he had not already come with the set purpose of marrying her, he should undoubtedly have lost his heart to this winsome and brilliant little creature. All that evening, as they slid through the water, paddling between the twilight fields, pushing through the beds of water-lilies, sometimes spurting swiftly through the rustling reeds, with the gorgeous banks on either side, and the sunset beyond the hills, and the figures strolling tranquilly along the meadows, De la Louvière only felt himself drifting and drifting into a new and wonderful world. This time-wise young fellow felt as if he was being washed white and happy and peaceful in the lovely purple river. Everything was at once

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twilit, moonlit, and sunlit. The water flowed deep and clear. Patty, with a bulrush wand, sat at the stern, bending forward and talking happily; the people on the shore heard her sweet chatter.

Once Patty uttered a cry of alarm. 'Don! Where was Don?' He had been very contentedly following them, trotting along the bank; but now in the twilight they could not make him out. Patty called and her father halloed, and Rémy pulled out a little silver whistle he happened to have in his pocket and whistled shrilly. Old Don, who had been a little ahead, hearing all this hullabaloo, quietly splashed from the banks into the water, and came swimming up to the side of the boat, with his honest old nose in the air, and his ears floating on the little ripples. Having satisfied them of his safety, and tried to wag his tail in the water, he swam back to shore again, and the boat sped on its way home through the twilight.

'What a nice little whistle!' said Patty.

'Do take it,' said Rémy. 'It is what I call my dogs at home with. Please take it. It will give me pleasure to think that anything of mine is used by you.'

'Oh, thank you,' said Patty, as she put out her soft warm hand through the cool twilight, and took it from him. Maynard was looking out for the lock and paying no attention. Rémy felt as glad as if some great good-fortune had happened to him.

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The light was burning in the drawing-room when they got back. Mrs. Maynard had ordered some coffee to be ready for them, and was waiting with a somewhat anxious face for their return.

'Oh, mamma, it has been so heavenly!' said Patty, once more sinking into her own corner by the window.

And then the moon came brightly hanging in the sky, and a nightingale began to sing. Rémy had never been so happy in his life before. He had forgotten all about his speculation, and was only thinking that his English cousin was more charming than all his grandmother's money-bags piled in a heap. For that night he forgot his part of 'wolf' altogether.

In the morning, Patty took her cousin to the greenhouse, to the stable to see her pony; she did the honours of Sunnymede with so much gaiety and frankness that her mother had not the heart to put conscious thoughts into the child's head, and let her go her own way. The two came back late to the early dinner; Mr. Maynard frowned, he disliked unpunctuality. Rémy was too happy to see darkness anywhere, or frowns in anybody's face; but then his eyes were dazzled. It was too good to last, he thought, and in truth a storm was rising even then.

During dinner the post came in. Mrs. Maynard glanced at her correspondence, and then at her husband, as she put it into her pocket. 'It is from my mother,' she said. Rémy looked a little interested, but asked no

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questions, and went on talking and laughing with his cousin; and after dinner, when Mrs. Maynard took her letter away to read in the study, the two young people went and sat upon the little terrace in front of the house.

The letter was from Madame Capuchon, and Mrs. Maynard having read it, put it into her husband's hands with a little exclamation of bewildered dismay.

'What is the matter, my dear?' said Maynard, looking up from his paper, which had come by the same afternoon post.

'Only read this,' she said; 'you will know best what to do. Oh, Henry, he must go; he should never have come.'

My heroine's mother was never very remarkable for spirit: her nearest approach to it was this first obstinate adherence to anything which Henry might decree. Like other weak people she knew that if she once changed her mind she was lost, and accordingly she clung to it in the smallest decisions of life with an imploring persistence: poor Marthe, her decision was a straw in a great sea of unknown possibilities. Madame Capuchon was a strong-minded woman, and not afraid to change her mind.

'I have heard from Felicie,' the old lady wrote; 'but she says nothing of a certain fine scheme which I hasten to acquaint you with. I learnt it by chance the other day when Micotton was with me consulting on the subject of my will which it seems has given great offence to the

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De la Louvières. Considering the precarious state of my health, they might surely have taken patience: but I am now determined that they shall not benefit by one farthing that I possess. Micotton, at my desire, confessed that Rémy has gone over to England for the express purpose of making advances to Marthe, your daughter, in hopes of eventually benefiting through me. He is a young man of indifferent character, and he inherits, no doubt, the covetous and grasping spirit of his father.' Mr. Maynard read no farther: he flushed up, and began to hiss out certain harmless oaths between his teeth. 'Does that confounded young puppy think my Patty is to be disposed of like a bundle of hay? Does he come here scheming after that poor old woman's money? Be hanged to the fellow! he must be told to go about his business, Marthe, or the child may be taking a fancy to him. Confound the impertinent jackanapes!'

'But who is to tell him?' poor Marthe faltered, with one more dismal presentiment.

'You, to be sure,' said Maynard, clapping on his felt hat and marching right away off the premises.

In the meantime Rémy and his cousin had been very busy making Don jump backwards and forwards over the low parapet. They had a little disjointed conversation between the jumping.

'What is your home like?' Patty asked once.

'I wish it was more like yours,' said Rémy, with some

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expression; 'it would make me very happy to think that, some day, it might become more so.'

The girl seemed almost to understand his meaning, for she blushed and laughed, and tossed her gloves up in the air, and caught them again. 'I love my home dearly,' said she.

At that moment the garden door opened, and Mr. Maynard appeared; but instead of coming towards them, he no sooner saw the two young folks than he began walking straight away in the direction of the outer gate, never turning his head or paying any attention to his daughter's call.

'Papa, papa!' cried Patty, springing up; but her father walked on, never heeding, and yet she was sure he must have heard. What could it mean? She looked at Rémy, who was quite unconscious, twirling his moustache, and stirring up Don with the toe of his boot; from Rémy she looked round to the library window, which was open wide, and where her mother was standing.

'Do you want me?' Patty cried, running up.

'Ask your cousin to come and speak to me,' said Mrs. Maynard, very gravely—'here, in papa's room.'

Patty was certain that something was wrong. She gave Rémy her mother's message with a wistful glance to see whether he did not suspect any trouble. The young man started up obediently, and Patty waited outside in the sun, listening to the voices droning away within,

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watching the sparkle of the distant river, lazily following the flight of a big bumble-bee,—wondering when their talk would be over and Rémy would come out to her again. From where she sat Patty could see the reflection of the two talkers in the big sloping looking-glass over the library table. Her mother was standing very dignified and stately, the young man had drawn himself straight up—so straight, so grim and fierce-looking, that Patty, as she looked, was surer and more sure that all was not right; and she saw her mother give him a letter, and he seemed to push it away. And then it was not Rémy but Mrs. Maynard who came out, looking very pale, and who said, 'Patty, darling, I have been very much pained. Your cousin has behaved so strangely and unkindly to you and me and to your father, that we can never forget or forgive it. Your father says so.'

Mrs. Maynard had tried to perform her task as gently as she could. She told Rémy that English people had different views on many subjects from the French; that she had learned his intentions from her mother, and thought it best to tell him plainly at once that she and Mr. Maynard could never consent to any such arrangement; and under the circumstances—that—that—that——

'You can never consent,' repeated the young man, stepping forward and looking through her and round about her, seeing all her doubts, all her presentiments, reading the letter, overhearing her conversation with her

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husband all in one instant—so it seemed to poor Marthe. 'And why not, pray?'

'We cannot argue the question,' his aunt said, with some dignity. 'You must not attempt to see my daughter any more.'

'You mean to say that you are turning me, your sister's son, out of your house,' the indignant Rémy said. 'I own to all that you accuse me of. I hoped to marry your daughter. I still hope it; and I shall do so still,' cried the young man.

Rémy's real genuine admiration for Patty stood him in little stead; he was angry and lost his temper in his great disappointment and surprise. He behaved badly and foolishly.

'I had not meant to turn you out of my house,' said his aunt, gravely; 'but for the present I think you had certainly better go. I cannot expose my daughter to any agitation.'

'You have said more than enough,' said Rémy. 'I am going this instant.' And as he spoke he went striding out of the room.

And so Rémy came back no more to sit with Patty under the ash-tree; but her mother, with her grave face, stood before her, and began telling her this impossible, unbelievable fact;—that he was young, that he had been to blame.

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'He unkind! he to blame! Oh, mamma!' the girl said, in a voice of reproach.

'He has been unkind and scheming, and he was rude to me, darling. I am sorry, but it is a fact.' And Marthe as she spoke glanced a little anxiously at Patty, who had changed colour, and then at De la Louvière himself, who was marching up, fierce still and pale, with bristling hair—his nose looking hooked and his lips parting in a sort of scornful way. He was carrying his cloak on his arm.

'I have come to wish you good-by, and to thank you for your English hospitality, madame,' said he, with a grand sweeping bow. 'My cousin, have you not got a word for me?'

But Mrs. Maynard's eyes were upon her; and Patty, with a sudden shy stiffness for which she hated herself then and for many and many a day and night after, said good-by, looking down with a sinking heart, and Rémy marched away with rage and scorn in his. 'They are all alike; not one bit better than myself. That little girl has neither kindness, nor feeling, nor fidelity in her. The money: they want to keep it for themselves—that is the meaning of all these fine speeches. I should like to get hold of her all the same, little stony-hearted flirt, just to spite them; yes, and throw her over at the last moment, money and all—impertinent, ill-bred folks.' And it happened that just at this minute Mr. Maynard was coming

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back thoughtfully the way he had gone, and the two men stopped face to face, one red, the other pale. Mrs. Maynard, seeing the meeting, came hastily up.

'You will be glad to hear that I am going,' said Rémy, defiantly looking at his uncle as he had done at his aunt.

'I am very glad to hear it,' said Mr. Maynard. 'I have no words to express the indignation which fills me at the thought of your making a speculation of my daughter's affections;—and the sooner you are gone the better.'

'Hush, dear,' said Mrs. Maynard, laying her hand on her husband's arm, and looking at Patty, who had followed her at a little distance. She had had her own say, and was beginning to think poor Rémy hardly dealt with.

'Let him say what he likes, madame, I don't care,' De la Louvière said. 'I am certainly going. You have failed, both of you, in kindness and hospitality; as for my cousin——;' but looking at Patty, he saw that her eyes were full of tears, and he stopped short. 'I am all that you think,' Rémy went on. 'I am in debt, I have lost money at gambling, I am a good-for-nothing fellow. You might have made something of me, all of you, but you are a sordid nation and don't understand the feelings of a French gentleman.'

With this bravado Rémy finally stalked off.

'I think, perhaps, we were a little hasty,' said the injudicious Marthe, while Patty suddenly burst out crying and ran away.

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Poor little Patty came down to tea that evening looking very pale, with pouting red lips, prettier than ever, her mother thought, as she silently gave the child her cupful of tea and cut her bread-and-butter, and put liberal helpings of jam and fruit before her, dainties that were served in the old cut-glass dishes that had sparkled on Maynard's grandmother's tea-table before. The old Queen Anne teapot, too, was an heirloom, and the urn and the pretty straight spoons, and the hideous old china tea-set with the red and yellow flowers. There were other heirlooms in the family, and even Patty's bright eyes had been her great-grandmother's a century ago, as anybody might see who looked at the picture on the wall. Mr. Maynard was silent; he had been angry with his wife for her gentle remonstrance, furious with the young man for the high hand in which he had carried matters, displeased with Patty for crying, and with himself for not having foreseen the turn things were taking: and he now sat sulkily stirring his tea—sulky but relenting—and not indisposed for peace. After all he had had his own way, and that is a wonderful calming process. Rémy was gone; nothing left of him but a silver whistle that Patty had put away in her work-table drawer. He was gone; the echo of his last angry words were dinning in Maynard's ears, while a psalm of relief was sounding in the mother's heart. Patty sulked like her father, and ate her bread and jam without speaking a word. There was no great

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harm done, Mrs. Maynard thought, as she kept her daughter supplied. She herself had been so disturbed and overcome by the stormy events of the day that she could not eat. She made the mistake that many elders have made before her: they mistake physical for mental disturbance; poor well-hacked bodies that have been jolted, shaken, patched and mended, and strained in half-a-dozen places, are easily affected by the passing jars of the moment: they suffer and lose their appetite, and get aches directly which take away much sense of the mental inquietude which brought the disturbance about. Young healthy creatures like Patty can eat a good dinner and feel a keen pang and hide it, and chatter on scarcely conscious of their own heroism.

But as the days went by Mrs. Maynard suspected that all was not well with the child; there seemed to be a little effort and strain in the life which had seemed so easy and smooth before. More than once, Mrs. Maynard noticed her daughter's eyes fixed upon her curiously and wistfully. One day the mother asked her why she looked at her so. Patty blushed but did not answer. The truth was, it was the likeness to her cousin which she was studying. These blushes and silence made Marthe Maynard a little uneasy.

But more days passed, and the mother's anxious heart was relieved. Patty had brightened up again, and looked like herself, coming and going in her Undine-like

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way, bringing home long wreaths of ivy, birds' eggs, sylvan treasures. She was out in all weathers. Her locks only curled the crisper for the falling rain, and her cheeks only brightened when the damp rose up from the river. The time came for their annual visit to Madame de Capuchon. Patty, out in her woods and meadows, wondered and wondered what might come of it; but Poictiers is a long way from Fontainebleau, 'fortunately,' 'alas!' thought the mother—in her room, packing Patty's treasures—and the daughter out in the open field in the same breath. They were so used to one another these two, that some sort of magnetic current passed between them at times, and certainly Marthe never thought of Rémy de la Louvière that Patty did not think of him too.

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III.

Old Madame de Capuchon was delighted with her granddaughter, and the improvement she found in her since the year before. She made more of her than she had ever done of Marthe her daughter. All manner of relics were produced out of the old lady's ancient stores to adorn Miss Patty's crisp locks and little round white throat and wrists; small medallions were hung round her neck, brooches and laces pinned on, ribbons tied and muslins measured, while Simonne tried her hand once again at cake-making. Patty, in return, brought a great rush of youth, and liberty, and sunshine into the old closed house, where she was spoiled, worshipped, petted, to her heart's content. Her mother's tender speechless love seemed dimmed and put out by this chorus of compliments and admiration. 'Take care of your complexion; whatever you do, take care of your complexion,' her grandmother was always saying. Madame Capuchon actually sent for the first modiste in the town, explained what she wanted, and ordered a scarlet 'capeline'—such as ladies wear by the sea-side—a pretty frilled, quilted, laced, and braided

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scarlet hood, close round the cheeks and tied up to the chin, to protect her granddaughter's youthful bloom from the scorching rays of the sun. She need not have been so anxious. Patty's roses were of a damask that does not fade in the sun's rays.

Squire Maynard, who was a sensible man, did not approve of all this to-do, and thought it was all very bad for Miss Patty, 'whose little head was quite full enough of nonsense already,' he said. One day Patty came home with the celebrated pearls round her neck that Madame de la Louvière had tried so hard to get. Madame Capuchon forgot that she had already given them to her eldest daughter, but Mrs. Maynard herself was the last to have remembered this, and it was her husband who said to her, with a shrug of the shoulders,—

'It is all very well, but they are yours, my dear, and your mother has no more right to them than Patty has.'

Patty pouted, flashed, tossed her little head, flung her arms round her mother's neck, all in an instant. She was a tender-hearted little person, heedless, impulsive, both for the best and the worst, as her poor mother knew to her cost. The squire thought his wife spoiled her daughter, and occasionally tried a course of judicious severity, and, as I have already said, he had only succeeded in frightening the child more than he had any idea of.

'Take them, dear mamma,' said Patty, pulling off her

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necklace. 'I didn't know anything about them. Grandmamma tied them on.'

'Darling,' said her mother, 'you are my jewel. I don't want these pearls: and if they are mine, I give them to you.'

Two pearl drops were in Mrs. Maynard's eyes as she spoke. She was thinking of her long lonely days, and of the treasures which were now hers. Looking at this bright face in its scarlet hood—this gay, youthful presence standing before them all undimmed, in the splendour of its confidence and brightness—it seemed to Mrs. Maynard as if now, in her old age, now that she had even forgotten her longings for them, all the good things were granted to her, the want of which had made her early life so sad. It was like a miracle, that at fifty all this should come to her. Her meek glad eyes sought her husband's. He was frowning, and eyeing his little girl uneasily.

'I don't like that red bonnet of yours,' said he. 'It is too conspicuous. You can't walk about Paris in that.'

'Paris!' shrieked Patty. 'Am I going to Paris, papa?'

'You must take great care of your father, Patty,' said her mother. 'I shall stay here with my mother until you come back.'

I am not going to describe Patty's delights and surprise. Everybody has seen through her eyes, at one time or another, and knows what it is to be sixteen, and

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transported into a dazzling ringing world of sounds, and sights, and tastes, and revelations. The good father took his daughter to dine off delicious little dishes with sauces, with white bread and butter to eat between the courses; he hired little carriages, in which they sped through the blazing streets, and were set down at the doors of museums and palaces, and the gates of cool gardens where fountains murmured and music played; he had some friends in Paris—a good-natured old couple, who volunteered to take charge of his girl; but for that whole, happy, unspeakable week he rarely left her. One night he took her to the play—a grand fairy piece—where a fustian peasant maiden was turned into a satin princess in a flash of music and electric light. Patty took her father's arm, and came away with the crowd, with the vision of those waving halos of bliss opening and shining with golden rain and silver-garbed nymphs, and shrieks of music and admiration, all singing and turning before her. The satin princess was already re-transformed, but that was no affair of Patty's. Some one in the crowd, better used to plays and fairy pieces, coming along behind the father and daughter, thought that by far the prettiest sight he had seen that night was this lovely eager little face before him, and that those two dark eyes—now flashing, now silent—were the most beautiful illuminations he had witnessed for many a day. The bright eyes never discovered who it was behind her. Need I say that it was Rémy?

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who, after looking for them for a couple of days in all the most likely places, took a ticket for Fontainebleau on the third evening after he had seen them. What fascination was it that attracted him? He was hurt and angry with her, he loved and he longed to see her. And then again vague thoughts of revenge crossed his mind; he would see her and win her affections, and then turn away and leave her, and pay back the affront which had been put upon him. M. Rémy, curling his moustaches in the railway-carriage, and meditating this admirable scheme, was no very pleasant object to contemplate.

'That gentleman in the corner looks ready to eat us all up,' whispered a little bride to her husband.

Meanwhile Patty had been going on her way very placidly all these three days, running hither and thither, driving in the forest, dining with her grandmother, coming home at night under the stars. The little red hood was well known in the place. Sometimes escorted by Betty, an English maid who had come over with the family; oftener Mr. Maynard himself walked with his daughter. Fontainebleau was not Littleton, and he did not like her going about alone, although Patty used to pout and rebel at these precautions. Mrs. Maynard herself rarely walked; she used to drive over to her mother's of an afternoon, and her husband and daughter would follow her later; and Simonne, radiant, would then superintend the preparation of fricandeaus and galettes,

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such as she loved to set before them, and cream tarts and chicken and *vol au vent.* There was no end to her resources. And yet to hear Madame Capuchon one would think that she led the life of an invalid ascetic starving on a desert island. 'These railways carry away everything,' the old lady would say; 'they leave one nothing. When I say that I have dined, it is for the sake of saying so. You know I am not particular, but they leave us nothing, absolutely nothing, to eat.' On this especial occasion the old lady was in a state of pathetic indignation over M. Bougu, her butterman, who had been taken up for false practices. Simonne joined in,—'I went in for the tray,' she said. 'Oh, I saw at once, by the expression of madame's face, that there was something wrong. It was lard that he had mixed with his butter. As it is, I do not know where to go to find her anything fit to eat. They keep cows at the hotel,' she added, turning to Marthe as she set down a great dish full of cream-cakes upon the table. 'Perhaps they would supply us, if you asked them.'

Mrs. Maynard undertook the negotiation; and next day she called Patty to her into the little drawing-room, and gave the child a piece of honeycomb and a little pat in a vine-leaf, to take to Madame Capuchon, as a sample. 'Give her my love, and tell her she can have as much more as she likes; and call Betty to go with you,' said Mrs. Maynard. 'Betty, Betty, Betty, Betty, come

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directly,' cried Patty, outside the door, dancing off delighted with her commission. Betty came directly; but there are two roads to Madame Capuchon's, one by the street and one by the park. Patty certainly waited for three minutes at the park-gate, but Betty was trudging down the town, and gaping into all the shops as she went along, while her young mistress, who had soon lost patience, was hurrying along the avenues, delighted to be free—hurrying and then stopping, as the fancy took her. The sun shone, the golden water quivered, the swans came sailing by. It was all Patty could do not to sing right out and dance to her own singing. By degrees her spirits quieted down a little. . . .

* * * * *

Patty was standing leaning over the stone parapet at the end of the terrace, and looking deep down into the water which laps against it. A shoal of carp was passing through the clear cool depths. Solemn patriarchs, bald, dim with age, bleared and faded and overgrown with strange mosses and lichens, terrible with their chill life of centuries, solemnly sliding, followed by their court through the clear cool waters where they had floated for ages past. Unconscious, living, indifferent while the generations were succeeding one another, and angry multitudes surging and yelling while kingdoms changed hands; while the gay court ladies, scattering crumbs with their dainty fingers, were hooted by the hags and furies

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of the Revolution, shrieking for blood, and for bread for their children:—the carps may have dived for safety into the cool depths of the basins while these awful ghosts of want and madness clamoured round the doors of the palace,—ghosts that have not passed away for ever, alas! with the powders and patches, and the stately well-bred follies of the court of Dives. After these times a new order of things was established, and the carps may have seen a new race of spirits in the quaint garb and odd affectation of a bygone age, of senates and consuls and a dead Roman people; and then an Emperor, broken-hearted, signed away an empire, and a Waterloo was fought; and to-day began to dawn, and the sun shone for a while upon the kingly dignity of Orleans; and then upon a Second Empire, with flags and many eagles and bees to decorate the whole, and trumpets blowing, and looms at work, and a temple raised to the new goddess of industry.

What did it all matter to the old grey carp? They had been fed by kings and by emperors; and now they were snatching as eagerly at the crumbs which Patty Maynard was dropping one by one into the water, and which floated pleasantly into their great open maws. The little bits of bread tasted much alike from wherever they came. If Patty had been used to put such vague speculations into words, she might have wondered sometimes whether we human carps, snatching at the crumbs which

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fall upon the waters of life, are not also greedy and unconscious of the wonders and changes that may be going on close at hand in another element to which we do not belong, but at which we guess now and then.

A crumb fell to little Patty herself, just then gazing down deep into the water. The sun began to shine hot and yet more hot, and the child put up her big white umbrella, for her hood did not shade her eyes. A great magnificent stream of light illumined the grand old place, and the waving tree-tops, and the still currentless lake. The fish floated on basking, the birds in the trees seemed suddenly silenced by the intense beautiful radiance, the old palace courts gleamed bravely, the shadows shrank and blackened, hot, sweet, and silent the light streamed upon the great green arches and courts and colonnades of the palace of garden without, upon the arches and courts and colonnades of the palace of marble within, with its quaint eaves and mullions, its lilies of France and D's and H's still entwined, though D and H had been parted for three centuries or more. It was so sweet and so serene, that Patty began to think of her cousin. She could not have told you why fine days put her in mind of him, and of that happy hour in the boat. She pulled the little silver whistle out of her pocket, and to-day she could not help it, instead of pushing the thought of Rémy away, as she had done valiantly of late, the silly child turned the whistle in her hands round and round again. It gleamed in the sun like a

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whistle of fire; and then slowly she put it to her lips. Should she frighten the carp? Patty wondered; and as she blew a very sweet long note upon the shrill gleaming toy, it echoed oddly in the stillness, and across the water. The carp did not seem to hear it; but Patty stopped short, frightened, ashamed, with burning blushes, for, looking up at the sound of a footstep striking across the stone terrace, she saw her cousin coming towards her.

To people who are in love each meeting is a new miracle. This was an odd chance certainly, a quaint freak of fortune. The child thought it was some incantation that she had unconsciously performed; she sprang back, her dark eyes flashed, the silver whistle fell to the ground and went rolling and rolling and bobbing across the stones to the young man's feet.

He picked it up and came forward with an amused and lover-like smile, holding it out in his hand. 'I have only just heard you were here,' he said; 'I came to see my grandmother last night, from Paris. My dear cousin, what a delightful chance! Are not you a little bit glad to see me?' said the young man, romantically. It was a shame to play off his airs and graces upon such a simple downright soul as Marthe Maynard. Someone should have boxed his ears as he stood there, smiling, handsome, irresistible, trying to make a sentimental scene out of a chance meeting. Poor little Patty, with all her courage and simpleness, was no match for him at first; she looked

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up at his face wistfully and then turned away, for one burning blush succeeded another, and then she took courage again. 'Of course I am glad to see you, cousin Rémy,' said she, brightly, and she held out her little brown hand and put it frankly into his. 'It is the greatest pleasure and delight to me, above all now when I had given up all hopes for ever; but it's no use,' said Patty, with a sigh, 'for I know I musn't talk to you, they wouldn't like it. I must never whistle again upon the little whistle, for fear you should appear,' she said, with a sigh.

This was no cold-hearted maiden. Rémy forgot his vague schemes of revenge and desertion, the moment he heard the sound of her dear little voice. 'They wouldn't like it,' said Rémy, reddening, 'and I have been longing and wearying to see you again, Patty. What do you suppose I have come here for?—Patty, Patty, confess that you were thinking of me when you whistled,' and as he said this, the wolf's whole heart melted. 'Do you know how often I have thought of you since I was cruelly driven away from your house?'

Two great, ashamed, vexed, sorrowful tears started into Marthe's eyes as she turned away her head and pulled away her hand.

'Oh, Rémy, indeed, indeed there must have been some reason, some mistake: dear papa, if you knew how he loves me and mamma; and, oh, how miserable it made me.'

'I daresay there was some mistake, since you say so,'

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said the wily wolf. 'Patty, only say you love me a little, and I will forgive everything and anything.'

'I musn't let anyone talk about forgiving *them*,' said the girl. 'I would love you a great deal, if I might,' she added, with another sigh. 'I do love you, only I try not to, and I think—I am sure I shall get over it in time, if I can only be brave.'

This was such an astounding confession that De la Louvière hardly knew how to take it; touched and amused and amazed, he stood there, looking at the honest little sweet face. Patty's confession was a very honest one. The girl knew that it was not to be; she was loyal to her father, and, above all, to that tender, wistful mother. Filial devotion seemed, like the bright eyes and silver tea-pot, to be an inheritance in her family. She did not deceive herself; she knew that she loved her cousin with something more than cousinly affection, but she also believed that it was a fancy which could be conquered. And she set her teeth and looked quite fierce at Rémy; and then she melted again, and said in her childish way, 'You never told me you would come if I blew upon the whistle.'

Do her harm—wound her—punish her parents by stab bing her tender little heart! Rémy said to himself that he had rather cut off his moustaches.

There was something loyal, honest, and tender in the little thing, that touched him inexpressibly. He suddenly began to tell himself that he agreed with his uncle that

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to try to marry Patty for money's sake had been a shame and a sin. He had been a fool and a madman, and blind and deaf. Rémy de la Louvière was only half a wolf after all—a sheep in wolf's clothing. He had worn the skin so long that he had begun to think it was his very own, and he was perfectly amazed and surprised to find such a soft, tender place beneath it.

It was with quite a different look and tone from the romantic, impassioned, corsair manner in which he had begun, that he said very gently, 'Dear Patty, don't try too hard not to like me. I cannot help hoping that all will be will. You will hope too, will you not?'

'Yes, indeed, I will,' said Patty; 'and now, Rémy, you must go: I have talked to you long enough. See, this is the back gate and the way to the Rue de la Lampe.' For they had been walking on all this time and following the course of the avenue. One or two people passing by looked kindly at the handsome young couple strolling in the sunshine; a man in a blouse, wheeling a hand-truck, looked over his shoulder a second time as he turned down the turning to the Rue de la Lampe. Patty did not see him, she was absorbed in one great resolution. She must go now, and say good-by to her cousin.

'Come a little way farther with me,' said Rémy, 'just a little way under the trees. Patty, I have a confession to make to you. You will hate me, perhaps, and yet I cannot help telling you.'

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'Oh, indeed I must not come now,' Patty said. 'Good-by, good-by.'

'You won't listen to me, then?' said the young man; so sadly, that she had not the courage to leave him, and she turned at last, and walked a few steps.

'Will you let me carry your basket?' said her cousin. 'Who are you taking this to?'

'It is for my grandmother,' said the girl, resisting. 'Rémy, have you really anything to say?'

They had come to the end of the park, where its gates lead into the forest; one road led to the Rue de la Lampe, the other into the great waving world of trees. It was a lovely summer's afternoon. There was a host in the air, delighting and basking in the golden comfort; butterflies, midges, flights of birds from the forest were passing. It was pleasant to exist in such a place and hour, to walk by Rémy on the soft springing turf, and to listen to the sound of his voice under the shade of the overarching boughs.

'Patty, do you know I did want to marry you for your money?' Rémy said at last. 'I love you truly; but I have not loved you always as I ought to have done—as I do now. You scorn me, you cannot forgive me?' he added, as the girl stopped short. 'You will never trust me again.'

'Oh, Rémy, how could you. . . Oh, yes, indeed, indeed I do forgive you. I do trust you,' she added quickly, saying anything to comfort and cheer him when

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he looked so unhappy. Every moment took them farther and farther on. The little person with the pretty red hood and bright eyes and the little basket had almost forgotten her commission, her conscience, her grandmother, and all the other duties of life. Rémy, too, had forgotten everything but the bright sweet little face, the red hood, and the little hand holding the basket, when they came to a dark, enclosed halting-place at the end of the avenue, from whence a few rocky steps led out upon a sudden hillside, which looked out into the open world. It was a lovely surprising sight, a burst of open country, a great purple amphitheatre of rocks shining and hills spreading to meet the skies, clefts and sudden gleams, and a wide distant horizon of waving forest fringing the valley. Clouds were drifting and tints changing, the heather springing between the rocks at their feet, and the thousands of tree-tops swaying like a ripple on a sea.

Something in the great wide freshness of the place brought Patty to herself again.

'How lovely it is,' she said. 'Oh, Rémy, why did you let me come? Oh, I oughtn't to have come.'

Rémy tried to comfort her. 'We have not been very long,' he said. 'We will take the short cut through the trees, and you shall tell your mother all about it. There's no more reason why we shouldn't walk together now than when we were at Littleton.'

As he was speaking he was leading the way through

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the brushwood, and they got into a cross avenue leading back to the carriage-road.

'I shall come to Madame Capuchon's, too, since you are going,' said Rémy, making a grand resolution. 'I think perhaps she will help us. She is bound to, since she did all the mischief;' and then he went on a few steps, holding back the trees that grew in Patty's way. A little field-mouse peeped at them and ran away, a lightning sheet of light flashed through the green and changing leaves, little blue flowers were twinkling on the mosses under the trees, dried blossoms were falling, and cones and dead leaves and aromatic twigs and shoots.

'Is this the way?' said Patty, suddenly stopping short and looking about her. 'Rémy, look at those arrows cut in the trees; they are not pointing to the road we have come. Oh, Rémy, do not lose the way,' cried Patty, in a sudden fright.

'Don't be afraid,' Rémy answered, laughing, and hurrying on before her; and then he stopped short, and began to pull at his moustache, looking first in one direction, and then in another. 'Do you think they would be anxious if you were a little late?' he said.

'Anxious!' cried Patty. 'Mamma would die; she could not bear it. Oh, Rémy, Rémy, what shall I do?' She flushed up, and almost began to cry. 'Oh, find the way, please. Do you see any more arrows? Here is one; come, come.'

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Patty turned, and began to retrace her steps, hurrying along in a fever of terror and remorse. The wood-pigeons cooed overhead, the long lines of distant trees were mingling and twisting in a sort of dance, as she flew along.

'Wait for me, Patty,' cried Rémy. 'Here is someone to ask.' And as he spoke he pointed to an old woman coming along one of the narrow cross pathways, carrying a tray of sweetmeats and a great jar of lemonade.

'Fontainebleau, my little gentleman?' said the old woman. 'You are turning your back upon it. The arrows point away from Fontainebleau, and not towards the town. Do you know the big cross near the gate? Well, it is just at the end of that long avenue. Wait, wait, my little gentleman. Won't you buy a sweet sugarstick for the pretty little lady in the red hood? Believe me, she is fond of sugarsticks. It is not the first time that she has bought some of mine.'

But Rémy knew that Patty was in no mood for barley-sugar, and he went off to cheer up his cousin with the good news. The old woman hobbled off grumbling.

It was getting later by this time. The shadows were changing, and a western light was beginning to glow upon the many stems and quivering branches of the great waving forest. Everything glowed in unwearied change and beauty, but they had admired enough. A bird was singing high above over their heads, they walked on quickly in silence for half an hour—a long interminable half hour,

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and at the end of the avenue, as the old woman had told them, they found a wide stony ascending road, with the dark murmuring fringe of the woods on either side, and a great cross at the summit of the ascent. Here Patty sank down for a minute, almost falling upon the step, and feeling safe. This gate was close to the Rue de la Lampe.

'Now go,' she said to her cousin. 'Go on first, and I will follow, dear Rémy. I don't want to be seen with you any more. People know me and my red hood.'

De la Louvière could only hope that Patty had not already been recognised.

All the same he refused utterly to leave her until they reached the gates of the forest; then he took the short way to the Rue de la Lampe, and Patty followed slowly. She had had a shock, she wanted to be calm before she saw her grandmother. Her heart was beating still, she was tired and sorry. Patty's conscience was not easy—she felt she had done wrong, and yet—and yet—with the world of love in her heart it seemed as if nothing could be wrong and nobody angry or anxious.

Mrs. Maynard herself had felt something of the sort that afternoon after the little girl had left her. The mother watched her across the court-yard, and then sat down as usual to her work. Her eyes filled up with grateful tears as she bent over her sewing; they often did when Henry spoke a kind word or Patty looked specially happy.

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Yes, it was a miracle that at fifty all this should come to her, thought Marthe Maynard—brilliant beauty and courage and happiness, and the delight of youth and of early hopes unrepressed. It was like a miracle that all this had come to her in a dearer and happier form than if it had been given to herself. Marthe wondered whether all her share had been reserved for her darling in some mysterious fashion, and so she went on stitching her thoughts to her canvas as people do; peaceful, tranquil, happy thoughts they were, as she sat waiting for her husband's return. An hour or two went by, people came and went in the courtyard below, the little diligence rattled off to the railway; at last, thinking she heard Henry's voice, Marthe leant out of the window and saw him speaking to an old woman with a basket of sweetmeats, and then she heard the sitting-room door open, and she looked round to see who it was coming in. It was Simonne, who came bustling in with a troubled look, like ripples in a placid smooth pool. The good old creature had put on a shawl and gloves and a clean cap with huge frills, and stood silent, umbrella in hand, and staring at the calm-looking lady at her work-table.

'What is it?' said Marthe, looking up. 'Simonne, is my mother unwell?'

'Madame is quite well; do not be uneasy,' said Simonne, with a quick, uncertain glance in Mrs. Maynard's face

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'Have you brought me back Patty?' said Mrs. Maynard. 'Has Betty come with you?'

'Betty? I don't know where she is,' said Simonne. 'She is a craze-pated girl, and you should not allow her to take charge of Patty.'

Mrs. Maynard smiled. She knew Simonne's ways of old. All cooks, housekeepers, ladies'-maids, &c. under fifty were crazy-pated girls with Simonne, whose sympathies certainly did not rest among her own class. Mrs. Maynard's smile, however, changed away when she looked at Simonne a second time.

'I am sure something is the matter,' Marthe cried, starting up. 'Where's Patty?' The poor mother suddenly conjecturing evil had turned quite pale, and all the soft contentment and calm were gone in one instant. She seized Simonne's arm with an imploring nervous clutch, as if praying that it might be nothing dreadful.

'Don't be uneasy, madame,' said Simonne. 'Girls are girls, and that Betty is too scatterbrained to be trusted another time: she missed Patty and came alone to our house. Oh, I sent her off quickly enough to meet Mademoiselle. But you see, Madame,' Simonne was hurrying on nervously over her words, 'our Patty is so young, she thinks of no harm, she runs here and there just as fancy takes her; but a young girl must not be talked of, and—and it does not do for her to be seen alone

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in company with anybody but her mother or father. There's no harm done, but——'

'What are you talking of—why do you frighten me for nothing, Simonne?' said Mrs. Maynard, recovering crossly with a faint gasp of relief, and thinking all was well. She had expected a broken limb at the least in her sudden alarm.

'There, Marthe,' said Simonne, taking her hand, 'you must not be angry with me. It was the concierge de chez nous, who made a remark which displeased me, and I thought I had best come straight to you.'

'My Patty, my Patty! What have you been doing, Simonne? How dare you talk of my child to common people!' said the anxious mother.

'I was anxious, Madame,' said poor Simonne, humbly. 'I looked for her up the street and along the great avenue, and our concierge met me and said, "Don't trouble yourself. I met your young lady going towards the forest in company with a young man." She is a naughty child, and I was vexed, Madame, that is all,' said Simonne.

But Mrs. Maynard hardly heard her to the end,—she put up her two hands with a little cry of anxious horror. 'And is she not back? What have you been doing? why did you not come before? My Patty, my Patty! what absurd mistake is this? Oh, where is my husband? Papa, papa!' cried poor Mrs. Maynard, distracted, running out upon the landing. Mr. Maynard was coming upstairs

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at that instant, followed by the blowsy and breathless Betty.

Mr. Maynard had evidently heard the whole story: he looked black and white, as people do who are terribly disturbed and annoyed. Had they been at home in England, Patty's disappearance would have seemed nothing to them; there were half-a-dozen young cousins and neighbours to whose care she might have been trusted, but here, where they knew no one, it was inexplicable, and no wonder they were disquieted and shocked. Mr. Maynard tried to reassure his wife, and vented his anxiety in wrath upon the luckless Betty.

Marthe sickened as she listened to Betty's sobs and excuses. 'I can't help it,' said the stupid girl, with a scared face. 'Miss Patty didn't wait for me. The old woman says she saw a red hood in the forest, going along with a young man,—master heard her. . .'

'The concierge says he thinks it is missis's nephew!'

'Ah!' screamed poor Mrs. Maynard; 'I see it all.'

'Hold your tongue, you fool. How dare you all come to me with such lies!' shouted Maynard to the maid. He was now thoroughly frightened. After all, it might be a plot; who could tell what villany that young man might be capable of—carrying her off, marrying her; all for the sake of her money. And, full of this new alarm he rushed down into the court again. The old woman

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was gone, but a carriage was standing there waiting to be engaged.

'We may as well go and fetch Patty at your mother's,' Maynard called out to his wife, with some appearance of calmness. 'I daresay she is there by this time.' Mrs. Maynard ran downstairs and got in, Simonne bundled in too, and sat with her back to the horses. But that ten minutes' drive was so horrible that not one of them ever spoke of it again.

They need not have been so miserable, poor people, if they had only known Patty had safely reached her grandmother's door by that time. When the concierge, who was sitting on his barrow at the door, let her in and looked at her with an odd expression in his face, 'Simonne was in a great anxiety about you, mademoiselle,' said he; 'she is not yet come in. Your grandmamma is upstairs as usual. Have you had a pleasant walk?'

Patty made no answer; she ran upstairs quickly. 'I must not stay long,' she said to herself. 'I wonder if Rémy is there.' The front door was open, and she went in, and then along the passage, and with a beating heart she stopped and knocked at her grandmother's door. 'Come in, child,' the old lady called out from the inside; and as Patty nervously fumbled at the handle, the voice inside added, 'Lift up the latch, and the hasp will fall. Come in,' and Patty went in as she was told.

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It was getting to be a little dark indoors by this time, and the room seemed to Patty full of an odd dazzle of light—perhaps because the glass door of the dressing closet, in which many of Madame Capuchon's stores were kept, was open.

'Come here, child,' said her grandmother, hoarsely, 'and let me look at you.'

'How hoarsely you speak,' said Patty; 'I'm afraid your cold is very bad, grandmamma.'

The old lady grunted and shook her head. 'My health is miserable at all times,' she said. 'What is that you have got in your basket? butter, is it not, by the smell?'

'What a good nose you have, grandmamma,' said Patty, laughing faintly, and opening her basket. 'I have brought you a little pat of butter and some honeycomb, with mamma's love,' said Patty. 'They will supply you from the hotel, if you like, at the same price you pay now.'

'Thank you, child,' said Madame Capuchon. 'Come a little closer, and let me look at you. Why, what is the matter? You are all sorts of colours,—blue, green, red. What have you been doing, Miss? See if you can find my spectacles on that table.'

'What do you want them for, grandmamma?' Patty asked, fumbling about among all the various little odds and ends.

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'The better to see you, my dear, and anybody else who may call upon me,' said the grandmamma, in her odd broken English. Patty was nervous still and confused, longing to ask whether Rémy had made his appearance, and not daring to speak his name first. 'Come down here,' said her grandmother, deliberately putting on her spectacles. 'What is this I hear from your cousin, mademoiselle? Do you know that no well-bred young woman gives her heart without permission; and so I told him, and sent him about his business,' said the old lady, looking fixedly through her glasses. 'Ah, little girls like you are fortunate to have grannies to sever them from importunate admirers, and to keep such histories from their parents' ear.'

'What do you mean, grandmamma? I don't want to hide *anything*,' cried Patty, clasping her hands piteously, and bursting into tears. 'Only I *do* care for him dearly, dearly, dearly, grandmamma,' and turning passionately, in her confusion she knocked over a little odd-shaped box that was upon the table, and it opened, and something fell out.

'Be careful, child! What have you done?' said the old lady, sharply. 'Here, give the things to me.'

'It's—it's something made of ivory, grandmamma,' said stupid Patty, looking up bewildered. 'What is it for?'

'Take care; take care. Those are my teeth, child. I

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cannot eat comfortably without them,' said the old lady, pettishly. 'Here, give them to me,' and as Patty put out her hand the old woman seized it in her own withered old fingers, and holding the child by a firm grip, said again, 'And so you love him?'

'What is the use—who cares?' answered poor Patty, desperately, 'when you all want to send him away from me.'

'We know better,' Madame Capuchon was beginning, or going to begin, when there was a sudden crack at the door of the glass cupboard. It seemed to Patty as if her grandmother, changing her mind, cried out passionately, 'No, they shall not send me away.' In a moment a figure coming, Patty knew not from whence, had sprung upon her, and caught the little thing in two strong arms, and held her close to a heart that was beating wildly. 'You are my wife — you shall not escape me,' cried Rémy, who had been silent all this while, but who could keep silence no longer, while Patty, blushing deeper and more deeply, then pale, then trembling, angry and frowning all at once, tried in vain to escape.

Madame Capuchon, against all historical facts, began to scream and ring her bell, and at that instant, as it happened, came voices in the passage, a confusion outside, the door of the room burst open, and Mrs. Maynard rush-

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ing in, burst into a flood of tears, tore Patty away from Rémy, and clasped her to her heart.

'I tell you she is here, monsieur,' Simonne was saying to Maynard himself, who was following his wife. As soon as he saw her there, with Patty in her arms, 'Now, Marthe,' he said, 'you will at last believe what a goose you are at times;' and he began to laugh in a superior sort of fashion, and then he choked oddly and sat down with his face hidden in his hands. He had not even seen Rémy as yet, who thought it best to leave them all to themselves for awhile, and went away through the glass cupboard to the dining-room again.

'But what is it all about?' asked Madame Capuchon from her bed.

'My child, I thought your cousin had robbed us of you,' her mother sobbed.

It was all over now, and Patty, also in penitent tears, was confessing what had detained her. They could not be angry at such a time, they could only clasp her in their loving arms. All the little miniatures were looking on from their hooks on the wall, the old grandmother was shaking her frills in excitement, and nodding and blinking encouragement from her alcove.

'Look here, Henry,' said she to her son-in-law; 'I have seen the young man, and I think he is a very fine young fellow. In fact, he is now waiting in the dining-room, for I sent him away when I heard la

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petite coming. I wanted to talk to her alone. Félicie has written to me on the subject of their union; he wishes it, I wish it, Patty wishes it; oh, I can read little girls' faces: he has been called to the bar; my property will remain undivided; why do you oppose their marriage? I cannot conceive what objection you can ever have had to it.'

'What objection!' said the squire, astounded. 'Why, you yourself warned me. Félicie writes as usual with an eye to her own interest—a grasping, covetous——'

'Hush, hush, dear; since Rémy has brought Patty safe back we have no reason to be angry,' interceded Mrs. Maynard, gently pushing her husband towards the door.

The remembrance of her own youth had come back to her here in the place where she had suffered so long. Ah! she had acted a hard mother's part when she ever forgot it; and was not Patty her own child? and could she condemn her to a like trial? The old lady's hands and frills were trembling more and more by this time; she was not used to being thwarted; the squire also was accustomed to have his own way.

'My Félicie, my poor child, I cannot suffer her to be spoken of in this way,' cried Madame Capuchon, who at another time would have been the first to complain.

'Patty is only sixteen,' hazarded Mrs. Maynard.

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'I was sixteen when I married,' said Madame Capuchon.

'Patty shall wait till she is sixty-six before I give her to a penniless adventurer,' cried the squire, in great wrath.

'Very well,' said the old lady, spitefully. 'Now I will tell you what I have told him. As I tell you, he came to see me just now, and is at this moment, I believe, devouring the remains of the pie Simonne prepared for your luncheon. I have told him that he shall be my heir whether you give him Patty or not. I am not joking, Henry, I mean it. I like the young man exceedingly. He is an extremely well-bred young fellow, and will do us all credit, and a girl does not want money like a man.'

Maynard shrugged his shoulders and looked at his wife.

'But, child, do you really care for him?' Patty's mother said, reproachfully. 'What can you know of him?' and she took both the little hands in hers.

Little Patty hung her head for a minute. 'Oh, mamma, he has told me everything: he told me he did think of the money at first, but only before he knew me. Dear papa, if you talked to him you would believe him, indeed you would—indeed, indeed you would.' Patty's imploring wistful glance touched the squire, and, as she said, Maynard could not help believing in Rémy when he came to talk things over quietly with him, and without losing his temper.

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He found him in the dining-room, with a bottle of wine and the empty pie-dish before him; the young man had finished off everything but the bones and the cork and the bottle. 'I had no breakfast, sir,' said Rémy, starting up, half laughing, half ashamed. 'My grandmother told me to look in the cupboard, but hearing your daughter's voice I could not help going back just now.'

'Such a good appetite should imply a good conscience,' Maynard thought; and at last he relented, and eventually grew to be very fond of his son-in-law.

Patty and Rémy were married on her seventeenth birthday. I first saw them in the court-yard of the hotel, but afterwards at Sunnymede, where they spent last summer.

Madame Capuchon is not yet satisfied with the butter. It is a very difficult thing to get anywhere good. Simonne is as devoted as ever, and tries hard to satisfy her mistress.

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JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

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JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

CHAPTER I.

ON MONSTERS, ETC.

Most of us have read at one time or another in our lives the article entitled *Gigantes*, which is to be found in a certain well-known dictionary. It tells of that terrible warfare in which gods and giants, fighting in fury, hurled burning woods and rocks through the air, piled mountains upon mountains, brought seas from their boundaries, thundering, to overwhelm their adversaries;—it tells how the gods fled in their terror into Egypt, and hid themselves in the shapes of animals, until Hercules, the giant-killer of those strange times, sprang up to rescue and deliver the world from the dire storm and confusion into which it had fallen. Hercules laid about him with his club. Others since then, our Jack among the rest, have fought with gallant courage and devotion, and given their might and their strength and their lives to the battle. That battle which has no end, alas! and which rages from

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sunrise to sundown,—although hero after hero comes forward, full of hope, of courage, of divine fire and indignation.

Who shall gainsay us, if now-a-days some of us may perhaps be tempted to think that the tides of victory flow, not with the heroes, but with the giants; that the gods of our own land are hiding in strange disguises; that the heroes battling against such unequal odds are weary and sad at heart; while the giants, unconquered still, go roaming about the country, oppressing the poor, devouring the children, laying homes bare and desolate?

Here is 'The Times' of to-day,[1] full of a strange medley and record of the things which are in the world together—Jacks and giants, and champion-belts and testimonials; kings and queens, knights and castles and ladies, screams of horror, and shouts of laughter, and of encouragement or anger. Feelings and prejudices and events,—all vibrating, urging, retarding, influencing one another.

And we read that some emperors are feasting in company at their splendid revels, while another is torn from his throne and carried away by a furious and angry foe, by a giant of the race which has filled the world with such terror in its time. Of late a young giant of that very tribe has marched through our own streets; a giant at play, it is true, and feeding his morbid appetite with

[1] May, 1867.

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purses, chains and watches, and iron park-railings; but who shall say that he may not perhaps grow impatient as time goes on, and cry for other food.

And meanwhile people are lying dying in hospitals, victims of one or more of the cruel monsters, whose ill deeds we all have witnessed. In St. Bartholomew's wards, for instance, are recorded twenty-three cases of victims dying from what doctors call *delirium tremens*. Which Jack is there among us strong enough to overcome this giant with his cruel fierce fangs, and force him to abandon his prey? Here is the history of two men suffocated in a vat at Bristol by the deadly gas from spent hops. One of them, Ambrose, is hurrying to the other one's help, and gives up his life for his companion. It seems hard that such men should be sent unarmed into the clutch of such pitiable monsters as this; and one grudges these two lives, and the tears of the widows and children. I might go on for many pages fitting the parable to the commonest facts of life. The great parochial Blunderbore still holds his own; some of his castles have been seized, but others are impregnable; their doors are kept closed, their secrets are undiscovered.

Other giants, of the race of Cormoran, that 'dwell in gloomy caverns, and wade over to the mainland to steal cattle,' are at this instant beginning to creep from their foul dens, by sewers and stagnant waters, spreading death and dismay along their path. In the autumn their raids

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are widest and most deadly. Last spring I heard two women telling one another of a giant of the tribe of Cormoran camping down at Dorking in Surrey. A giant with a poisoned breath and hungry jaws, attacking not only cattle, but the harmless country people all about; children, and men, and women, whom he seized with his deadly gripe, and choked and devoured. Giant Blunderbore, it must be confessed, has had many a hard blow dealt him of late from one Jack and another. There is one gallant giant-killer at Fulham hard by, waging war with many monsters, the great blind giant Ignorance among the rest. Some valiant women, too, there are who have armed themselves, and gone forth with weak hands and tender strong hearts to do their best. I have seen some lately who are living in the very midst of the dreary labyrinth where one of the great Minotaurs of the city is lurking. They stand at the dark mouth of the poisonous caverns, warning and entreating those who, in their blindness and infatuation, are rushing thither, to beware.

'I took a house and came,' said one of them simply to my friend Mrs. K——, when she asked her how it happened that she was established there in the black heart of the city. All round her feet a little ragged tribe was squatting on the floor, and chirping, and spelling and learning a lesson which, pray heaven, will last them their lives; and across the road, with pretty little crumpled

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mob-caps all awry on their brown heads, other children were sewing and at work under the quiet rule of their good teachers. The great business of the city was going on outside. The swarming docks were piled with bales and crowded with workmen; the main thoroughfares streaming and teeming with a struggling life; the side streets silent, deserted, and strangely still. A bleak, north-east wind was blowing down some of these grey streets. I have a vision before me now of one of them; a black deserted alley or passage, hung with some of those rags that seem to be like the banners of this reign of sorrow and sin. The wind swooped up over the stones, the rags waved and fell, and a colourless figure passing up the middle of the dirty gutter pulled at its grimy shawl and crouched as it slid along.

We may well say, we Londoners, see how far the east is from the west. I myself, coming home at night to the crowded cheerful station, and travelling back to the light of love, of warmth, of comfort, find myself dimly wondering whether those are not indeed our sins out yonder set away from us, in that dreary East of London district; our sins alive and standing along the roadside in rags, and crying out to us as we pass.

Here in our country cottage the long summer is coming to an end, in falling leaves and setting suns, and gold and russet, where green shoots were twinkling a little

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time ago. The banks of the river have shifted their colours, and the water, too, has changed. The song of the birds is over; but there are great flights in the air, rapid, mysterious. For weeks past we have been living in a gracious glamour and dazzle of light and warmth; and now, as we see it go, H. and I make plans, not unwillingly, for a winter to be passed between the comfortable walls of our winter home. The children, hearing our talk, begin to prattle of the treasures they will find in the nursery at London, as they call it. Dolly's head, which was unfortunately forgotten when we came away, and the panniers off the wooden donkey's back, and little neighbour Joan, who will come to tea again, in the doll's tea-things. Yesterday, when I came home from the railway-station across the bridge, little Anne, who had never in her short life seen the lamps of the distant town alight, came toddling up, chattering about 'de pooty tandles,' and pulling my dress to make me turn and see them too.

To-night other lights have been blazing. The west has been shining along the hills with a gorgeous autumnal fire. From our terrace we have watched the lights and the mists as they succeed one another, streaming mysteriously before yonder great high altar. It has been blazing as if for a solemn ceremonial and burnt sacrifice. As we watch it, other people look on in the fields, on the hills, and from the windows of the town. Evening

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incense rises from the valley, and mounts up through the stillness. The waters catch the light, and repeat it; the illumination falls upon us, too, as we look and see how high the heavens are in comparison with the earth; and suddenly, as we are waiting still, and looking and admiring, it is over—the glory has changed into peaceful twilight.

And so we come away, closing shutters and doors and curtains, and settling down to our common occupations and thoughts again; but outside, another high service is beginning, and the lights of the great northern altar are burning faintly in their turn.

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CHAPTER II.

CORMORAN.

In the same way that fancy worlds and dreams do not seem meant for the dreary stone streets and smoky highways of life, neither do they belong to summer and holiday time, when reality is so vivid, so sweet, and so near. It is but a waste to dream of fairies dancing in rings, or peeping from the woods, when the singing and shining is in all the air, and the living sunshiny children are running on the lawn, and pulling at the flowers with their determined little fingers; and when there are butterflies and cuckoos and flowing streams, and the sounds of flocks and the vibrations of summer everywhere. Little Anne comes trotting up with a rose-head tight crushed in her hand; little Margery has got a fern-leaf stuck into her hat; Puck, Peasblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustard-seed, themselves, are all invisible in this great day-shine. The gracious fancy kingdom vanishes at cock-crow, we know. It is not among realities so wonderful and beautiful that we can scarce realise them that we must look for it. Its greatest triumphs are where no other light shines to

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brighten—by weary sick beds; when distance and loneliness oppress. Who cannot remember days and hours when a foolish conceit has come now and again, like a 'flower growing on the edge of a precipice,' to distract the dizzy thoughts from the dark depths below?

Certainly it was through no fancy world that poor John Trevithic's path led him wandering in life, but amid realities so stern and so pitiful at times that even his courage failed him now and then. He was no celebrated hero, though I have ventured to christen him after the great type of our childhood; he was an honest, outspoken young fellow, with a stubborn temper and a tender heart, impressionable to outer things, although from within it was not often that anything seemed to affect his even moods and cheerful temper. He was a bright-faced, broad-set young fellow, about six-and-twenty, with thick light hair, and eagleish eyes, and lips and white teeth like a girl. His hands were like himself, broad and strong, with wide competent fingers, that could fight and hold fast, if need be; and yet they were so clever and gentle withal, that children felt safe in his grasp and did not think of crying, and people in trouble would clutch at them when he put them out. Perhaps Jack did not always understand the extent of the griefs for which his cheerful sympathy was better medicine after all than any mere morbid investigations into their depths could have proved to most of us.

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The first time I ever heard of the Rev. John Trevithic was at Sandsea one morning, when my maid brought in two cards, upon which were inscribed the respective names of Miss Moineaux and Miss Triquett. I had taken a small furnished house at the seaside (for H. was ailing in those days, and had been ordered salt air by the doctors); we knew nobody and nothing of the people of the place, so that I was at first a little bewildered by the visit; but I gathered from a few indescribable indications that the small fluttering lady who came in sideways was Miss Moineaux, and the bony, curly, scanty personage with the big hook-nose who accompanied her, Miss Triquett. They both sat down very politely, as people do who are utter strangers to you and about to ask you for money. Miss Moineaux fixed a little pair of clear meek imploring eyes upon me. Miss Triquett took in the apartment with a quick uncomfortable swoop or ball-like glance. Then she closed her eyes for an instant as she cleared her throat.

She need not have been at any great pains in her investigations; the story told itself. Two middle-aged women, with their desks and work-baskets open before them, and *The Times* and some Indian letters just come in, on the table, the lodging-house mats, screens, Windsor chairs, and druggets, a fire burning for H.'s benefit, an open window for mine, the pleasant morning wash and rush of the sea against the terrace upon which the win-

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dows opened, and the voices of H.'s grandchildren playing outside. I can see all the cheerful glitter now as I write. I loved the little place that strikes me so quaintly and kindly as I think of it. The sun shone all the time we were there; day by day I saw health and strength coming into my H.'s pale face. The house was comfortable, the walks were pleasant, good news came to us of those we loved. In short, I was happy there, and one cannot always give a reason for being happy. In the meantime, Miss Triquett had made her observations with her wandering ball eyes.

'We called,' she said, in a melancholy clerical voice, 'thinking that you ladies might possibly be glad to avail yourselves of an opportunity for subscribing to a testimonial which we are about to present to our friend and pastor, the Reverend John Trevithic, M.A., and for which my friend Miss Moineaux and myself are fully prepared to receive subscriptions. You are perhaps not aware that we lose him on Tuesday week?'

'No, indeed,' said I, and I am afraid my capstrings began to rustle, as they have a way of doing when I am annoyed.

'I'm sure I'm afraid you must think it a great liberty of us to call,' burst in little Miss Moineaux, flurriedly, in short disconnected sentences. 'I trust you will pardon us. They say it is *quite* certain he is going. We *have* had a suspicion—perhaps . . . .' Poor Miss Moineaux

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stopped short, and turned very red, for Triquett's eye was upon her. She continued, falteringly, 'Miss Triquett kindly suggested collecting a teapot and strainer, if possible—it depends, of course, upon friends and admirers. You know how one *longs* to show one's gratitude; and I'm sure in our hopeless state of apathy . . . . we had so neglected the commonest precautions——'

Here Miss Triquett interposed. 'The authorities were greatly to blame. Mr. Trevithic did his part, no more; but it is peculiarly as a pastor and teacher that we shall miss him. It is a pity that you have not been aware of his ministry.' (A roll of the eyes.) A little rustle and chirrup from Miss Moineaux.

'If the ladies had only heard him last Sunday afternoon—no, I mean the morning before.'

'The evening appeal was still more impressive,' said Miss Triquett. 'I am looking forward anxiously to his farewell next Sunday.'

It was really too bad. Were these two strange women who had come to take forcible possession of our morning room about to discuss at any length the various merits of Mr. Trevithic's last sermon but two, but three, next but one, taking up my time, my room, asking for my money? I was fairly out of temper when, to my horror, H., in her flute voice from the sofa, where she had been lying under her soft silk quilt, said,—'Mary, will you give these ladies a sovereign for me towards the

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teapot. Mr. Trevithic was at school with my Frank, and this is not, I think, the first sovereign he has had from me.'

Miss Triquett's eyes roved over to the sofa. It must have seemed almost sacrilege to her to speak of Mr. Trevithic as a schoolboy, or even to have known him in jackets. 'It is as a tribute to the pastor that these subscriptions are collected,' said she, with some dignity, 'not on any lower——'

But it was too late, for little Miss Moineaux had already sprung forward with a grateful 'Oh, thank you!' and clasped H.'s thin hand.

And so at last we got rid of the poor little women. They fluttered off with their prize, their thin silk dresses catching the wind as they skimmed along the sands, their little faded mants and veils and curls and petticoats flapping feebly after them, their poor little well-worn feet patting off in search of fresh tribute to Trevithic.

'I declare they were both in love with him, ridiculous old gooses,' said I. 'How could you give them that sovereign?'

'He was a delightful boy,' said H. (She melts to all schoolboys still, though her own are grown men and out in the world.) 'I used to be very angry with him; he and Frank were always getting into scrapes together,' said H., with a smiling sigh, for Major Frank was on his way home from India, and the poor mother could trust

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herself to speak of him in her happiness. 'I hope it is the right man,' H. went on, laughing. 'You must go and hear the farewell oration, Mary, and tell me how many of these little ladies are carried out of church.'

They behaved like heroines. They never faltered or fainted, they gave no outward sign (except, indeed, a stifled sob here and there). I think the prospect of the teapot buoyed them up; for after the service two or three of them assembled in the churchyard, and eagerly discussed some measure of extreme emphasis. They were joined by the gentleman who had held the plate at the door, and then their voices died away into whispers, as the rector and Mr. Trevithic himself came out of the little side door, where Miss Bellingham, the rector's daughter, had been standing waiting. The rector was a smug old gentleman in a nice Sunday tie. He gave his arm to his daughter, and trotted along, saying, 'How do? how do?' to the various personages he passed.

The curate followed: a straight and active young fellow, with a bright face, a face that looked right and left as he came along. He didn't seem embarrassed by the notice he excited. The four little girls from Coote Court (so somebody called them) rushed forward to meet him, saying, 'Good-by, dear Mr. Trevithic, good-by.' Mrs. Myles herself, sliding off to her pony carriage, carrying her satin train all over her arms, stopped to smile, and to put out a slender hand, letting the satin

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stuff fall into the dust. Young Lord and Lady Wargrave were hurrying away with their various guests, but they turned and came back to say a friendly word to this popular young curate; and Colonel Hambledon, Lord Wargrave's brother, gave him a friendly nod, and said, 'I shall look in one day before you go.' I happened to know the names of all these people, because I had sat in Mrs. Myles's pew at church, and I had seen the Wargraves in London.

The subscribers to the teapot were invited to visit it at Mr. Philips's in Cockspur Street, to whom the design had been intrusted. It was a very handsome teapot, as ugly as other teapots of the florid order, and the chief peculiarity was that a snake grasped by a clenched hand formed the handle, and a figure with bandages on its head was sitting on the melon on the lid. This was intended to represent an invalid recovering from illness. Upon one side was the following inscription:—

TO
THE REV. JOHN TREVITHIC, M.A.
FROM HIS PARISHIONERS AT SANDSEA,
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF HIS EXERTIONS DURING
THE CHOLERA SEASON OF 18—,
AND HIS SUCCESSFUL AND ENTERPRISING EFFORTS FOR THE IMPROVED
DRAINAGE OF HIGH STREET AND THE NEIGHBOURING ALLEYS,
ESPECIALLY THOSE
KNOWN AS 'ST. MICHAEL'S BUILDINGS.'

Upon the other,—

TO THE REV. JOHN TREVITHIC, M.A.

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Both these inscriptions were composed by Major Coote, of Coote Court, a J.P. for the county. Several other magistrates had subscribed, and the presentation paper was signed by most of the ladies of the town. I recognised the bold autograph of Louisa Triquett, and the lady-like quill of Sarah Moineaux, among the rest. H. figured as 'Anon.' down at the bottom.

Jack had honestly earned his teapot, the pride of his mother's old heart. He had worked hard during that unfortunate outbreak of cholera, and when the summer came round again, the young man had written quires, ridden miles, talked himself hoarse, about this neglected sewer in St. Michael's Buildings. The Town Council, finding that the whole of High Street would have to be taken up, and what a very serious undertaking it was likely to be, were anxious to compromise matters, and they might have succeeded in doing so if it had not been for the young man's determination. Old Mr. Bellingham, who had survived some seventy cholera seasons, was not likely to be very active in the matter. Everybody was away, as it happened, at that time, except Major Coote, who was easily talked over by anybody; and Jobsen, the mayor, had got hold of him, and Trevithic had to fight the battle alone. One person sympathised with him from the beginning, and talked to her father and insisted, very persistently, that he should see the necessity of the measure. This was Anne Bellingham who, with her soft pink

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eyes fixed on Trevithic's face, listened to every word he said with interest—an interest which quite touched and gratified the young man, breathless and weary of persuading fishmongers, of trying to influence the sleek obstinate butcher, and the careworn baker with his ten dusty children, and the stolid oil and colourman, who happened to be the mayor that year. It seemed, indeed a hopeless case to induce these worthy people to increase the rates, to dig up the High Street under their very windows, to poison themselves and their families, and drive away custom just as the season was beginning. John confessed humbly that he had been wrong, that he should have pressed the matter more urgently upon them in the spring, but he had been ill and away, if they remembered, and others had promised to see to it. It would be all over in a week, before their regular customers arrived.

Jack's eloquence succeeded in the end. How it came about I can scarcely tell — he himself scarcely knew. He had raised the funds, written to Lord Wargrave, and brought Colonel Hambledon himself down from town; between them they arranged with the contractors, and it was all settled almost without anybody's leave or authority. One morning, Trevithic hearing a distant rumbling of wheels, jumped up from his breakfast and ran to the window. A file of carts and workmen were passing the end of the street; men with pickaxes and shovels;

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carts laden with strange-looking pipes and iron bars. Mr. Moffat, the indignant butcher, found a pit of ten feet deep at his shop-door that evening; and Smutt, the baker, in a fury, had to send his wife and children to her mother, to be out of the way of the mess. In a week, however, the whole thing was done, the pit was covered over, the foul stream they dreaded was buried down deep in the earth, and then in a little while the tide of opinion began to turn. When all the coast was in a terror and confusion, when cholera had broken out in one place and in another, and the lodging-houses were empty, the shopkeepers loud in complaints,—at Sandsea, thanks to these 'well-timed exertions,' as people call draining, not a single case was reported, and though the season was not a good one for ordinary times, compared to other neighbouring places, Sandsea was triumphant. Smutt was apologetic, Moffat was radiant, and so was Anne Bellingham in her quiet way. As for Miss Triquett, that devoted adherent, she nearly jumped for joy, hearing that the mayor of the adjoining watering-place was ill of the prevailing epidemic and not expected to live.

And then the winter went by, and this time of excitement passed over and the spring-time came, and John began to look about and ask questions about other men's doings and ways of life. It did not come upon him all in one day that he wanted a change, but little by little he realised that something was amiss. He himself could

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hardly tell what it was when Colonel Hambledon asked him one day. For one thing I think his own popularity oppressed him. He was too good-humoured and good-natured not to respond to the advances which met him from one side and another, but there were but few of the people, except Miss Bellingham, with whom he felt any very real sympathy, beyond that of gratitude and good-fellowship. Colonel Hambledon was his friend, but he was almost constantly away, and the Wargraves, too, only came down from time to time. Jack would have liked to see more of Mrs. Myles, the pretty widow, but she was the only person in the place who seemed to avoid him. Colonel Coote was a silly good-natured old man; Miss Triquett and Miss Moineaux were scarcely companions. Talking to these ladies, who agreed with every word he said, was something like looking at his own face reflected in a spoon.

Poor Trevithic used to long to fly when they began to quote his own sermons to him; but his practice was better than his preaching, and, too kindhearted to wound their feelings by any expression of impatience, he would wait patiently while Miss Moineaux nervously tried to remember what it was that had made such an impression upon her the last time she heard him; or Miss Triquett expressed her views on the management of the poor-kitchen, and read out portions of her correspondence, such as :—

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'My dearest Maria,—I have delayed answering your very kind letter until the return of the warmer weather. Deeply as I sympathise with your well-meant efforts for the welfare of your poorer neighbours, I am sorry that I cannot subscribe to the fund you are raising for the benefit of your curate.'

'My aunt is blunt, very blunt,' said Miss Triquett, explaining away any little awkwardness; 'but she is *very* good, Mr. Trevithic, and you have sometimes said that we must not expect too much from our relations; I try to remember that.'

It was impossible to be seriously angry. Jack looked at her oddly as she stood there by the pump in the market-place where she had caught him. How familiar the whole scene was to him; the village street, the gable of the rectory on the hill up above, Miss Triquett's immovable glare;—a stern vision of her used to rise before him long after, and make him almost laugh, looking back from a different place and world, with strange eyes that had seen so many things that did not exist for him in those dear tiresome old days.

On this occasion Jack and Miss Triquett were on their way to the soup-kitchen, where the district meeting was held once a month. Seeing Colonel Hambledon across the street, Trevithic escaped for a minute to speak to him, while Triquett went on. The ladies came dropping

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in one by one. It was a low room with a bow-window on the street, and through an open door came a smell of roast mutton from the kitchen, where a fire was burning; and a glimpse of a poultry-yard beyond the kitchen itself. There were little mottoes hung up all about in antique spelling, such as 'Caste thy bredde upon ye watteres,' the fancy and design of Mrs. Vickers, the present manager. She was very languid, and high-church, and opposed to Miss Triquett and her friend Miss Hutchetts, who had reigned there before Mrs. Vickers' accession. This housekeeping was a serious business. It was a labour of love, and of jealousy too: each district lady took the appointment in turn, while the others looked on and ratified her measures. There was a sort of house of commons composed of Miss Simmonds, who enjoyed a certain consideration because she was so very fat; good old Mrs. Fox, with her white hair; and Mrs. Champion, a sort of lord chancellor in petticoats; and when everybody made objections the housekeeper sometimes resigned. Mrs. Vickers had held firm for some months, and here she is sorting out little tickets, writing little bills into a book, and comparing notes with the paper lists which the ladies have brought in.

Two-and-sixpence a week for her lodging, three children, two deformed; owes fifteen shillings, deserted wife, can get no relief from the parent,' Miss Moineaux reads out from her slip.

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'That is a hopeless case,' says Mrs. Champion; 'let her go into the workhouse.'

'They have been there for months,' says Miss Moincaux, perhaps.

'It is no use trying to help such people,' says Miss Triquett, decidedly.

'Here is a pretty doctrine,' cried Miss Simmonds; 'the worse off folks are, the less help they may expect.'

'When people are hopelessly lazy, dirty, and diseased,' said Miss Triquett, with some asperity, 'the money is only wasted which might be invaluable to the deserving. As long as I am entrusted with funds from this charity, I shall take care they are well bestowed.'

'I—I have promised Gummers some assistance,' faltered Miss Moineaux.

Miss Simmonds. 'And she ought to have it, my dear.'

Miss T. 'I think you forget that it is for Mr. Trevithic to decide.'

Miss S. 'I think you are forgetting your duty as a Christian woman.'

Miss T. 'I choose to overlook this insult. I will appeal to Mr. Trevithic.'

Miss S. 'Pray do not take the trouble to forgive me, Miss Triquett, or to appeal to anyone. Never since Miss Hutchetts went away——'

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Miss T. 'Miss Hutchetts is my friend, and I will not allow her name to be ——'

Exit Miss Moineaux in alarm to call for assistance. Miss Hutchetts, as they all know by experience, is the string of the shower-bath, the war-cry of the Amazons.

The battle was raging furiously when Miss Moineaux came back and flung herself devotedly into the *mêlée*. Miss Triquett was charging right and left, shells were flying, artillery rattling. It was a wonder the windows were not broken.

Mrs. Champion was engaged with a hand-to-hand fight with Miss Simmonds. Mrs. Vickers was laughing, Miss Moineaux was trembling; out of the window poured such a clamorous mob of words and swell of voices that John and the Colonel stopped to listen instead of going in. A dog and a puppy, attracted by the noise, stood wagging their tails in the sun.

'Hutchetts—Christian dooty—dirty children—statistics—gammon,' that was Miss Simmonds' voice, there was no mistaking. 'Ladies, I beg,' from Mrs. Vickers; and here the alarm-bell began to ring ten minutes before the children's dinner, and the sun shone, and the heads bobbed at the window, and all of a sudden there was a lull.

Trevithic, who like a coward had stopped outside while the battle was raging, ran up the low flight of steps to see what had been going on now that the danger was

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over, the guns silent, and the field, perhaps, strewed with the dead and the dying. No harm was done, he found, when he walked into the room, only Miss Triquett was hurt, her feelings had been wounded in the engagement, and she was murmuring that her friend Miss Hutchetts' character as a gentlewoman had been attacked, but no one was listening to her. Mrs. Vickers was talking to a smiling and pleasant-looking lady, who was standing in the middle of the room. I don't know by what natural art Mary Myles had quieted all the turmoil which had been raging a minute before, but her pretty winsome ways had an interest and fascination for them all; for old Miss Triquett herself, who had not very much that was pleasant or pretty to look at, and who by degrees seemed to be won over, too, to forget Miss Hutchetts, in her interest in what this pretty widow was saying,—it was only something about a school-treat in her garden. She stopped short and blushed as Trevithic came in. 'Oh, here is Mr. Trevithic,' she said; 'I will wait till he has finished his business.'

Jack would rather not have entered into it in her presence, but he began as usual, and plodded on methodically, and entered into the mysteries of soup meat, and flanuelling, and rheumatics, and the various ills and remedies of life, but he could not help feeling a certain scorn for himself, and embarrassment and contempt for the shame he was feeling; and as he caught Mary

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Myles' bright still eyes curiously fixed upon him, Jack wondered whether anywhere else in the world, away from these curious glances, he might not find work to do more congenial and worthy of the name. It was not Mrs. Myles' presence which affected him so greatly, but it seemed like the last grain in the balance against this chirruping tea-drinking life he had been leading so long. It was an impossibility any longer. He was tired of it. There was not one of these old women who was not doing her part more completely than he was, with more heart and good spirit than himself.

Some one had spoken to him of a workhouse chaplaincy going begging at Hammersley, a great inland town on the borders of Wales. Jack was like a clock which begins to strike as soon as the hands point to the hour. That very night he determined to go over and see the place; and he wrote to a friend of his at Hammersley to get him permission, and to tell the authorities of the intention with which he came.

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CHAPTER III.

AN OGRESS.

When John Trevithic, with his radiant, cheerful face, marched for the first time through the wards of St. Magdalene's, the old creatures propped up on their pillows to see him pass, both the master and mistress went with him, duly impressed with his possible importance, and pointed out one person and another; and as the mighty trio advanced, the poor souls cringed, and sighed, and greeted them with strange nods, and gasps, and contortions. John trudged along, saying little, but glancing right and left with his bright eyes. He was very much struck, and somewhat overcome by the sight of so much that was sad, and in orderly rows, and a blue cotton uniform. Was this to be his charge? all these hundreds of weary years, all these aching limbs and desolate waifs from stranded homes, this afflicted multitude of past sufferings? He said nothing, but walked along with his hands in his pockets, looking in vain to see some face brighten at the master's approach. The faces worked, twitched, woke up eagerly, but not one

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caught the light which is reflected from the heart. What endless wards, what a labyrinth of woes enclosed in the whitewashed walls. A few poor prints of royal personages, and of hop-gathering, and Christmas out of the *London News*, were hanging on them. Whitewash and blue cotton, and weary faces in the women's wards; whitewash and brown fustian, and sullen, stupid looks in the men's: this was all Trevithic carried away in his brain that first day;—misery and whitewash, and a dull choking atmosphere, from which he was ashamed almost to escape out into the street, into the square, into the open fields outside the town, across which his way led back to the station.

Man proposes, and if ever a man honestly proposed and determined to do his duty, it was John Trevithic, stretched out in his railway corner, young and stout of heart and of limb, eager for change and for work. He was not very particular; troubles did not oppose him morbidly. He had not been bred up in so refined a school that poverty and suffering frightened him; but the sight of all this hopelessness, age, failure, all neatly stowed away, and whitewashed over in those stony wards, haunted him all the way home. They haunted him all the way up to the rectory, where he was to dine that evening, and between the intervals of talk, which were pretty frequent after Miss Bellingham had left the room and the two gentlemen to their claret. Jack had almost

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made up his mind, and indeed he felt like a traitor as he came into the drawing-room, and he could not help seeing how Anne brightened up as she beckoned him across the room and made him sit down beside her. A great full harvest-moon was shining in at the window, a late autumnal bird was singing its melancholy song, a little wind blew in and rustled round the room, and Anne, in her muslins and laces, looked like a beautiful pale pensive dream-lady by his side. Perhaps he might not see her again, he thought, rather sentimentally, and that henceforth their ways would lie asunder. But how kind she had been to him. How pretty she was. What graceful womanly ways she had. How sorry he should be to part from her. He came away and said good-by quite sadly, looking in her face with a sort of apology, as if to beg her pardon for what he was going to do. He had a feeling that she would be sorry that he should leave her—a little sorry, although she was far removed from him. The bird sang to him all the way home along the lane, and Jack slept very sound, and awoke in the morning quite determined in his mind to go. As his landlady brought in his breakfast-tray he said to himself that there was nothing more to keep him at Sandsea, and then he sat down and wrote to Mr. Bellingham that instant, and sent up the note by Mrs. Bazley's boy.

A little later in the day, Trevithic went over to the rectory himself. He wanted to get the matter quite

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settled, for he could not help feeling sorry as he came along and wondering whether he had been right after all. He asked for the rector, and the man showed him into the study, and in a minute more the door opened, but it was Miss Bellingham, not her father, who came in.

She looked very strange and pale, and put out two trembling hands, in one of which she was holding John's letter.

'Oh, Mr. Trevithic, what is this? what does this mean?' she said.

What indeed? he need never have written the words, for in another minute, suddenly Miss Bellingham burst into tears.

They were very ill-timed tears as far as her own happiness was concerned, as well as that of poor John Trevithic, who stood by full of compassion, of secret terror at his own weakness, of which for the first time he began to suspect the extent. He was touched and greatly affected. He walked away to the fireplace and came back and stood before her, an honest, single-hearted young fellow, with an immense compassion for weak things, such as women and children, and a great confidence in himself; and as he stood there he flushed in a struggle of compassion, attraction, revulsion, pity, and cruel disappointment. Those tears coming just then relieved Anne Bellingham's heavy heart as they flowed in a

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passionate stream, and at the same time they quenched many a youthful fire, destroyed in their track many a dream of battle and victory, of persevering struggle and courageous efforts for the rights of the wronged upon earth. They changed the course of Trevithic's life at the time, though in the end, perhaps, who shall say that it was greatly altered by the complainings and foolish fondness of this poor soul whom he was now trying to quiet and comfort? I, for my part, don't believe that people are so much affected by circumstance in the long run as some people would have it. We think it a great matter that we turned to the right or the left; but both paths go over the hill. Jack, as his friends called him, had determined to leave a certain little beaten track of which he was getting weary, and he had come up to say good-by to a friend of his, and to tell her that he was going, and this was the result.

She went on crying—she could not help herself now. She was a fragile-looking little thing, a year or so younger than Jack, her spiritual curate and future husband, whom she had now known for two years.

'You see there is nothing particular for me to do here,' he stammered, blushing. 'A great strong fellow like myself ought to be putting his shoulder to the wheel.'

'I—I had so hoped that you had been happy here with us,' said Miss Bellingham.

'Of course I have been happy—happier than I have

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ever been in my life,' said Jack, with some feeling; 'and I shall never forget your kindness; but the fact is, I have been too happy. This is a little haven where some worn-out old veteran might recruit and grow young again in your kind keeping. It's no place for a raw recruit like myself.'

'Oh, think—oh, think of it again,' faltered Anne. 'Please change your mind. We would try and make it less—less worldly—more like what you wish.'

'No, dear lady,' said Trevithic, half smiling, half sighing. 'You are goodness and kindness itself, but I must be consistent, I'm afraid. Nobody wants me here; I may be of use elsewhere, and . . . . Oh! Miss Bellingham, don't—don't—pray don't——'

'You know—you know you are wanted here,' cried Miss Bellingham; and the momentous tears began to flow again down her cheeks all unchecked, though she put up her fingers to hide them. She was standing by a table, a slim creature, in a white dress. 'Oh, forgive me!' she sobbed, and she put out one tear-washed hand to him, and then she pushed him away with her weak violence, and went and flung herself down into her father's big chair, and leant against the old red cushion in an agony of grief, and shame, and despair. Her little dog began barking furiously at John, and her bird began to sing, and all the afternoon sun was streaming and blinding into the room.

Oh, don't, don't despise me,' moaned the poor thing,

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putting up her weary hand to her head. The action was so helpless, the voice so pathetic, that Trevithic resisted no longer.

'Despise you, my poor darling,' said John, utterly melted and overcome, and he stooped over, and took the poor little soul into his arms. 'I see,' he said, 'that we two must never be parted again, and if I go, you must come with me. . . .'

It was done. It was over. When Jack dashed back to his lodging it was in a state of excitement so great that he had hardly time to ask himself whether it was for the best or the worst. The tears of the trembling appealing little quivering figure had so unnerved him, so touched and affected him, that he had hardly known what he said or what he did not say, his pity and innate tenderness of heart had carried him away; it was more like a mother than a lover that he took this poor little fluttering bird into his keeping, and vowed and prayed to keep it safe. But everything was vague, and new, and unlifelike as yet. The future seemed floating with shadows and vibrations, and waving and settling into the present. He had left home a free man, with a career before him, without ties to check him or to hold him back (except, indeed, the poor old mother in her little house at Barfleet, but that clasp was so slight, so gentle, so unselfish, that it could scarcely be counted one now). And now 'Chained and

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bound by the ties of our sins,' something kept dinning in his bewildered brain.

Mrs. Bazley opened the door with her usual grin of welcome, and asked him if he had lunched, or if she should bring up the tray. Trevithic shook his head, and brushed past her up the stairs, leaping three or four at a time, and he dashed into his own room, and banged the door, and went and leant up against the wall, with his hand to his head, in a dizzy, sickened, miserable bewilderment, at which he himself was shocked and frightened. What had he done, what would this lead to? He paced up and down his room until he could bear it no longer, and then he went back to the rectory. Anne had been watching for him, and came out to meet him, and slid her jealous hand in his arm.

'Come away,' she whispered. 'There are some people in the house. Mary Myles is there talking to papa. I have not told him yet. I can't believe it enough to tell anyone.'

John could hardly believe it either, or that this was the Miss Bellingham he had known hitherto. She seemed so dear, so changed, this indolent county beauty, this calm young mistress of the house, now bright, quick, excited, moved to laughter: a hundred sweet tints and colours seemed awakened and brought to light which he had never noticed or suspected before.

'I have a reason,' Anne went on. 'I want you to

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speak of this to no one but me and papa. I will tell you very soon, perhaps to-morrow. Here, come and sit under the lilac-tree, and then they cannot see us from the drawing-room.'

Anne's reason was this, that the rector of a living in her father's gift was dying, but she was not sure that Jack would be content to wait for a dead man's shoes, and she gave him no hint of a scheme she had made.

The news of John's departure spread very quickly, but that of his engagement was only suspected; and no allusion to his approaching marriage was made when the teapot was presented to him in state.

I have ventured to christen my hero Jack, after a celebrated champion of that name; but we all know how the giant-killer himself fell asleep in the forest soon after he received the badge of honour and distinction to which he was so fairly entitled. Did poor John Trevithic, now the possessor of the teapot of honour, fall asleep thus early on his travels and forget all his hopes and his schemes? At first, in the natural excitement of his engagement, he put off one plan and another, and wrote to delay his application for the chaplaincy of the workhouse. He had made a great sacrifice for Anne: for he was not in love with her, as he knew from the very beginning: but he soon fell into the habit of caring for her and petting her, and, little by little, her devotion and blind partiality seemed to draw him nearer and nearer to

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the new ways he had accepted. The engagement gave great satisfaction. Hambledon shook him warmly by the hand, and said something about a better vocation than Bumbledon and workhouses. Jack bit his lips. It was a sore point with him, and he could not bear to think of it.

How Anne had begged and prayed and insisted, and put up her gentle hands in entreaty, when he had proposed to take her to live at Hammersley.

'It would kill me,' she said. 'Oh, John, there is something much better, much more useful for you coming in a very little while. I wanted people to hear of our marriage and of our new home together. Poor old Mr. Jorken is dead. Papa is going to give us his Lincolnshire living; it is his very own. Are you too proud to take anything from me, to whom you have given your life?' And her wistful entreaties were not without their effect, as she clung to him with her strange jealous eagerness. The determined young fellow gave in again and again. He had fallen into one of those moods of weakness and irresolution of which one has heard even among the fiercest and boldest of heroes. It was so great a sacrifice to him to give up his dreams that it never occurred to him for a moment that he was deserting his flag. It was a strange transformation which had come over this young fellow, of which the least part was being married.

I don't know whether the old ladies were disappointed or not that he did not actually go away as soon as was

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expected. The announcement of his marriage, however, made up for everything else, and they all attended the ceremony. Mr. and Mrs. Trevithic went away for their honeymoon, and to see old Mrs. Trevithic at Barfleet, and then they came back to the rectory until the house in Lincolnshire should be ready to receive them.

For some time after his marriage, Jack could hardly believe that so great an event had come about so easily. Nothing was much changed; the port-wine twinkled in the same decanters, the old rector dozed off in his chair after dinner, the sunset streamed into the dining-room from the same gap in the trees which skirted the churchyard. Anne, in the drawing-room in her muslins and lilac ribbons, sewed her worsted work in her corner by the window, or strummed her variations on the pianoforte. Tumty tinkle tumty—no—tinkle tumty tumty, as she corrected herself at the same place in the same song. 'Do you know the Songs Without Words?' she used to say to him when he first came. Know them! At the end of six weeks poor Jack could have told you every note of the half-dozen songs which Anne had twittered out so often, only she put neither song nor words to the notes, nor time, nor anything but pedals and fingers. One of these she was specially fond of playing. It begins with a few tramping chords, and climbs on to a solemn blast that might be sounded in a cathedral or at the triumphant funeral of a warrior dying in victory. Anne had taken

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it into her head to play this with expression, and to drag out the crisp chords—some of them she thought sounded prettier in a higher octave—and then she would look up with an archly affectionate smile as she finished. Jack used to respond with a kind little nod of the head at first, but he could not admire his wife's playing, and he wished she would mind her music and not be thinking of herself and nodding at him all the time. Had he promised to stuff up his ears with cotton wool and to act fibs at the altar? He didn't know; he rather thought he had—he—psha! Where was that number of the *North British Review?* and the young man went off into his study to look for it and to escape from himself.

Poor Jack! He dimly felt now and then that all his life he should have to listen to tunes such as these, and be expected to beat time to them. Like others before and since, he began to feel that what one expects and what is expected of one, are among the many impossible conditions of life. You don't get it and you don't give it, and you never will as long as you live, except, indeed, when Heaven's sacred fire of love comes to inspire and teach you to do unconsciously and gladly what is clearer and nearer and more grateful than the result of hours of straining effort and self-denial.

But these hours were a long way off as yet, and Jack was still asking himself how much longer it would all last, and how could it be that he was here settled for life and a

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married man, and that that pale little woman with the straight smooth light hair was his wife, and that fat old gentleman fast asleep, who had been his rector a few weeks ago, was his father-in-law now, while all the world went on as usual, and nothing had changed except the relations of these three people to each other?

Poor Jack! He had got a treasure of a wife, I suppose. Anne Bellingham had ruled at the rectory for twenty-four years with a calm, despotic sway that old Mr. Bellingham never attempted to dispute. Gentle, obstinate, ladylike, graceful, with a clear complexion, and one of those thin transparent noses which some people admire, she glided about in her full flitting skirts, feeling herself the prop and elegant comforter of her father's declining years. She used to put rosebuds into his study; and though old Mr. Bellingham didn't care for flowers, and disliked anything upon his table, he never thought of removing the slender glass fabric his daughter's white fingers had so carefully ornamented. She took care that clean muslin covers, with neat little bows at each corner, should duly succeed one another over the back of the big study chair. It is true the muslin scratched Mr. Bellingham's bald head, and he once ventured to remove the objectionable pinafore with his careful, clumsy old fingers; but next day he found it was firmly and neatly stretched down in its place again, and it was beyond his skill to unpick the threads. Anne also took care that her father's

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dressing things should be put out for dinner; and if the poor old gentleman delayed or tried to evade the ceremony, the startled man who cleaned the plate and waited upon the family was instructed to tell his master that the dressing-bell had rung: housemaids came in to tidy the room; windows were opened to renew the air: the poor rector could only retire and do as he was bid. How Anne had managed all her life to get her own way in everything is more than I can explain. It was a very calm, persistent, commonplace way, but everyone gave in to it. And so it happened that as soon as Jack was her husband, Anne expected that he was to change altogether; see with her pink, watery eyes; care for the things she cared for; and be content henceforth with her mild aspirations after county society in this world, and a good position in the next. Anne imagined, in some vague manner, that these were both good things to be worked out together by punctuality on Sundays, family prayer, a certain amount of attention to the neighbours (varying, of course, with the position of the persons in question), and due regard for the decencies of life. To see her rustling into church in her long silk dress and French bonnet, with her smooth bands of hair, the slender hands neatly gloved, and the prayer-book, hymn-book, pocket-handkerchief, and smelling-bottle, all her little phylacteries in their places, was an example to the neighbourhood. To the vulgar Christians straggling in from the lodging-houses and the town, and

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displaying their flyaway hats or highly-pomatumed heads of hair; to the little charity children, gaping at her over the wooden gallery; to St. Mary Magdalene up in the window, with her tangled locks; to Mrs. Coote herself, who always came in late, with her four little girls tumbling over her dress and shuffling after her; not to mention Trevithic himself, up in his reading desk, leaning back in his chair. For the last six months, in the excitement of his presence, in the disturbance of her usual equable frame of mind, it was scarcely the real Anne Bellingham he had known, or, maybe perhaps, it *was* the real woman stirred out of her Philistinism by the great tender hand of nature and the wonderful inspiration of love. Now, day by day her old ways began to grow upon her. Jack had not been married three weeks before a sort of terror began quietly to overwhelm him, a terror of his wife's genteel infallibility. As for Anne, she had got what she wanted; she had cried for the moon, and it was hers; and she, too began almost immediately to feel that now she had got it she did not know what to do with it exactly. She wanted it to turn the other way, and it wouldn't go—always to rise at the same hour, and it seemed to change day by day on purpose to vex her.

And then she cried again, poor woman; but her tears were of little avail. I suppose Jack was very much to blame, and certainly at this time his popularity declined a little, and people shrugged their shoulders and said he

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was a lucky young fellow to get a pretty girl and a good living and fifteen thousand pounds in one morning, and that he had feathered his nest well. And so he had, poor fellow, only too well, for to be sunk in a moral feather-bed is not the most enviable of fates to an active-minded man of six or seven and twenty.

The second morning after their return, Anne had dragged him out to her favourite lilac-tree bench upon the height in the garden, from whence you can see all the freshness of the morning brightening from bay to bay, green close at hand, salt wave and more green down below, busy life on land, and a flitting, drifting, white-sailed life upon the water. As Trevithic looked at it all with a momentary admiration, his wife said,—

'Isn't it much nicer to be up here with me, John, than down in those horrid lodgings in the town?'

And John laughed, and said, 'Yes, the air was very delicious.'

'You needn't have worked so hard at that draining if you had been living up here,' Anne went on, quite unconsciously. 'I do believe one might live for ever in this place and never get any harm from those miserable dens. I hear there is small-pox in Mark's Alley. Promise me, dear, that you will not go near them.'

'I am afraid I must go if they want me,' said John.

'No, dearest,' Anne said, gently. 'You have to think

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of me first now. It would be wrong of you to go. Papa and I have never had the small-pox.'

Trevithic didn't answer. As his wife spoke, something else spoke too. The little boats glittered and scudded on; the whole sight was as sweet and prosperous as it had been a minute before; but he was not looking at it any more; a strange new feeling had seized hold of him, a devil of sudden growth; and Trevithic was so little used to self-contemplation and inner experience, that it shocked him and frightened him to find himself standing there calmly talking to his wife, without any quarrel, angry in his heart; without any separation, parted from her. 'Anne and I could not be farther apart at this instant,' thought John, 'if I were at the other side of that sea, and she standing here all alone.'

'What is the matter?' said poor Anne, affectionately brushing a little thread off his coat.

'Can't you understand?' said he, drawing away.

'Understand?' Anne repeated. 'I know that you are naughty, and want to do what you must not think of.'

'I thought that when I married you, you cared for the things that I care about,' cried poor John, exasperated by her playfulness, 'and that you understood that a man must do his business in life, and that marriage does not absolve him from every other duty. I thought you cared —you said you did—for the poor people in trouble down

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there. Then melting—'Don't make it difficult for me to go to them, dear.'

'No, dear John. I could not possibly allow it,' said his wife, decidedly. 'You are not a doctor; it is not your business to nurse small-pox patients. Papa never thinks of going where there is infection.'

'My dear Anne,' said John, fairly out of temper, 'nobody ever thought your father had done his duty by the place, and you must allow your husband to go his own way, and not interfere any more.'

'It is very, very wrong of you, John, to say such things,' said Anne, flushing, and speaking very slowly and gently. 'You forget yourself and me too, I think, when you speak so coarsely. You should begin your reforms at home, and learn to control your temper before you go and preach to people with dreadful illnesses. They cannot possibly want you, or be in a fit state to be visited.'

If Anne had only lost her temper, flared up at him, talked nonsense, he could have borne it better; but there she stood, quiet, composed, infinitely his superior in her perfect self-possession. Jack left her, all ashamed of himself, in a fume and a fury, as he strode down into the town.

The small-pox turned out to be a false alarm, spread by some ingenious parishioners who wished for relief and who greatly disliked the visits of the excellent district ladies, and the matter was compromised. But that after-

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noon Miss Triquett, meeting John in the street, gave a penetrating and searching glance into his face. He looked out of spirits. Miss Triquett noticed it directly, and her heart, which had been somewhat hardened against him, melted at once.

Jack and his wife made it up. Anne relented, and something of her better self brought her to meet him half-way. Once more the strange accustomed feeling came to him, on Sundays especially. Old Billy Hunsden came cloppetting into church just as usual. There was the clerk, with his toothless old warble joining in with the chirp of the charity-school children. The three rows of grinning little faces were peering at him from the organ-loft. There was the empty bench at the top, where the mistress sat throned in state; the marble rolled down in the middle of the second lesson, with all the children looking preternaturally innocent and as if they did not hear the noise; the old patches of colour were darting upon the pulpit cushion from St. Mary Magdalene's red scarf in the east window. These are all small things, but they have taken possession of my hero, who is preaching away, hardly knowing what he says, but conscious of Anne's wistful gaze from the rectory pew, and of the curious eyes of all the old women in the free seats, who dearly love a timely word, and who have made up their minds to be stirred up that Sunday. It is not a bad sermon, but it is of things neither the preacher nor his congregation care very much to hear.

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CHAPTER IV.

JACK GOES TO SLEEP IN THE WOOD.

FEATHERSTON VICARAGE was a quaint, dreary, silent old baked block of bricks and stucco, standing on one of those low Lincolnshire hillocks—I do not know the name for them. They are not hills, but mounds; they have no shape or individuality, but they roll in on every side; they enclose the horizon; they stop the currents of fresh air; they give no feature to the foreground. There was no reason why the vicarage should have been built upon this one, more than upon any other of the monotonous waves of the dry ocean of land which spreads and spreads about Featherston, unchanging in its monotonous line. To look from the upper windows of the vicarage is like looking out at sea, with nothing but the horizon to watch —a dull sand and dust horizon, with monotonous waves and lines that do not even change or blend like the waves of the sea.

Anne was delighted with the place when she first came. Of course it was not to compare with Sandsea for pleasantness and freshness, but the society was infinitely

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better. Not all the lodging-houses at Sandsea could supply such an eligible circle of acquaintances as that which came driving up day after day to the vicarage door. The carriages, after depositing their owners, would go champing up the road to the little tavern of 'The Five Horseshoes,' at the entrance of the village, in search of hay and beer for the horses and men. Anne in one afternoon entertained two honourables, a countess, and two Lady Louisas. The countess was Lady Kidderminster and one of the Lady Louisas was her daughter. The other was a nice old maid, a cousin of Mrs. Myles, and she told Mrs. Trevithic something more of poor Mary Myles' married life than Anne had ever known before.

'It is very distressing,' said Anne, with a lady-like volubility, as she walked across the lawn with her guest to the carriage, 'when married people do not get on comfortably together. Depend upon it, there are generally faults on both sides. I daresay it is very uncharitable of me, but I generally think the woman is to blame when things go wrong,' said Anne, with a little conscious smirk. 'Of course we must be content to give up some things when we marry. Sandsea was far pleasanter than this as a residence; but where my husband's interests were concerned, Lady Louisa, I did not hesitate. I hope to get this into some order in time, as soon as I can persuade Mr. Trevithic. . . .'

'You are quite right, quite right,' said Lady Louisa

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looking round approvingly at the grass-grown walks and straggling hedges. 'Although Mary is my own cousin, I always felt that she did not understand poor Tom. Of course he had his little fidgety ways, like the rest of us.'

(Mary had never described her husband's little fidgety ways to anybody at much length, and if brandy and blows and oaths were among them, these trifles were forgotten now that Tom was respectably interred in the family vault and beyond reproaches.)

Lady Louisa went away favourably impressed by young Mrs. Trevithic's good sense and high-mindedness. Anne, too, was very much pleased with her afternoon. She went and took a complacent turn in her garden after the old lady's departure. She hardly knew where the little paths led to as yet, nor the look of the fruit-walls and of the twigs against the sky, as people do who have well paced their garden-walks in rain, wind and sunshine, in spirits and disquiet, at odd times and sad times and happy ones. It was all new to Mrs. Trevithic, and she glanced about as she went, planning a rose-tree here, a creeper there, a clearance among the laurels. 'I must let in a peep of the church through that elm-clump, and plant some fuchsias along that bank,' she thought. (Anne was fond of fuchsias.) 'And John must give me a hen-house. The cook can attend to it. The place looks melancholy and neglected without any animals about; we must certainly buy a pig. What a very delightful person Lady Kidderminster is; she

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asked me what sort of carriage we meant to keep—I should think with economy we *might* manage a pair. I shall get John to leave everything of that sort to me. I shall give him so much for his pocket-money and charities, and do the very best I can with the rest.' And Anne sincerely meant it when she made this determination, and walked along better pleased than ever, feeling that with her hand to pilot it along the tortuous way their ship could not run aground, but would come straight and swift into the haven of country society, for which they were making, drawn by a couple of prancing horses, and a riding horse possibly for John. And seeing her husband coming through the gate and crossing the sloping lawn, Anne hurried to meet him with glowing pink cheeks and tips to her eyelids and nose, eager to tell him her schemes and adventures.

Trevithic himself had come home tired and dispirited, and he could scarcely listen to his wife's chirrups with very great sympathy or encouragement.

'Lady Kidderminster wishes us to set up a carriage and a pair of horses!' poor Trevithic cried out, aghast; 'Why, my dear Anne, you must be—must be. . . . What do you imagine our income to be?'

'I know very well what it is,' Anne said, with a nod; 'better than you do, sir. With care and economy a very great deal is to be done. Leave everything to me, and don't trouble your foolish old head.'

But, my dear, you must listen for one minute,' Trevi-

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thic said. 'One thousand a year is not limitless. There are calls and drains upon our incomings——'

'That is exactly what I wanted to speak to you about, John,' said his wife gravely. 'For one thing, I have been thinking that your mother has a very comfortable income of her own,' Anne said, 'and I am sure she would gladly . . . .'

'I have no doubt she would,' Trevithic interrupted, looking full in his wife's face; 'and that is the reason that I desire that the subject may never be alluded to again, either to her or to me.' He looked so decided and stern, and his grey eagle eyes opened wide in a way his wife knew that meant no denial. Vexed as she was, she could not help a momentary womanly feeling of admiration for the undaunted and decided rule of the governor of this small kingdom in which she was vicegerent; she felt a certain pride in her husband, not in what was best in his temper and heart, but in the outward signs that anyone might read. His good looks, his manly bearing, his determination before which she had to give way again and again, impressed her oddly: she followed him with her eyes as he walked away into the house, and went on with her calculations as she still paced the gravel path, determining to come back secretly to the charge, as was her way, from another direction, perhaps failing and again only to ponder upon a fresh attack.

And meanwhile Anne was tolerably happy trimming

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her rose-trees, and arranging and rearranging the furniture, visiting at the big houses, and corresponding with her friends, and playing on the piano, and, with her baby, in time, when it came to live with them in the vicarage. Trevithic was tolerably miserable, fuming and consuming his days in a restless, impatient search for the treasures which did not exist in the arid fields and lanes round about the vicarage. He certainly discovered a few well-to-do farmers riding about their enclosures on their rough horses, and responding with surly nods to his good-humoured advances; a few old women selling lollipops in their tidy front kitchens; with shining pots and pans, and starch caps, the very pictures of respectability; little tidy children trotting to school along the lanes, hand in hand, with all the strings on their pinafores, and hard-working mothers scrubbing their parlours, or hanging out their linen to dry. The cottages were few and far between, for the farmers farmed immense territories; the labourers were out in the fields at sunrise, and toiled all day, and staggered home worn-out and stupefied at night; the little pinafores released from school at midday, would trot along the furrows with their fathers' and brothers' dinners tied up in bundles, and drop little frightened curtseys along the hedges when they met the vicar on his rounds. Dreary, dusty rounds they were—illimitable circles. The country-folks did not want his sermons, they were too stupid to understand what he said, they were too aimless and

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dispirited. Jack the Giant-Killer's sleep lasted exactly three years in Trevithic's case, during which the time did not pass, it only ceased to be. Once old Mr. Bellingham paid them a visit, and once Mrs. Trevithic, senior, arrived with her cap-boxes, and then everything again went on as usual, until Dulcie came to live with her father and mother in the old sun-baked, wasp-haunted place.

Dulcie was a little portable almanac to mark the time for both of them, and the seasons and the hour of the day, something in this fashion :—

Six months and Dulcie began to crawl across the druggeted floor of her father's study; nine months to crow and hold out her arms; a year must have gone by, for Dulcie was making sweet inarticulate chatterings and warblings, which changed into words by degrees—wonderful words of love and content and recognition, after her tiny life-long silence. Dulcie's clock marked the time of day something in this fashion :—

Dulcie's breakfast o'clock.

Dulcie's walk in the garden o'clock.

Dulcie's dinner o'clock.

Dulcie's bedtime o'clock, &c.

All the tenderness of Jack's heart was Dulcie's. Her little fat fingers would come tapping and scratching at his study-door long before she could walk. She was not in the least afraid of him, as her mother was sometimes. She did not care for his sad moods, nor sympathise with his

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ambitions, or understand the pangs he suffered, the regrets and wounded vanities and aspirations. Was time passing, was he wasting his youth and strength in that forlorn and stagnant Lincolnshire fen? What was it to her? Little Dulcie thought that when he crossed his legs and danced her on his foot, her papa was fulfilling all the highest duties of life; and when she let him kiss her soft cheek, it did not occur to her that every wish of his heart was not gratified. Hard-hearted, unsympathetic, trustful, and appealing little comforter and companion! Whatever it might be to Anne, not even Lady Kidderminster's society soothed and comforted Jack as Dulcie's did. This small Egyptian was a hard task-mistress, for she gave him bricks to make without any straw, and kept him a prisoner in a land of bondage; but for her he would have thrown up the work that was so insufficient for him, and crossed the Red Sea, and chanced the fortunes of life; but with Dulcie and her mother hanging to the skirts of his long black clerical coat, how could he go? Ought he to go? 400*l.* a year is a large sum to get together, but a small one to provide for three people—so long as a leg of mutton costs seven shillings, and there are but twenty shillings in the pound and 365 days in the year.

It was a hot, sultry afternoon, the dust was lying thick upon the lanes, on the country roads, that went creeping

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away white in the glare to this and that distant sleepy hollow. The leaves in the hedges were hanging upon their stalks; the convolvuluses and blackberries drooped their heads beneath the clouds that rose from the wreaths and piles of dust along the way. Four o'clock was striking from the steeple, and echoing through the hot still air; nobody was to be seen, except one distant figure crossing a stubble-field; the vicarage windows were close shuttered, but the gate was on the latch, and the big dog had just sauntered lazily through. Anne heard the clock strike from her darkened bedroom, where she was lying upon the sofa resting. Dulcie playing in her nursery counted the strokes. 'Tebben, two, one; nonner one,' that was how she counted. John heard the clock strike as he was crossing the dismal stubble-field; everything else was silent. Two butterflies went flitting before him in the desolate glare. It was all so still, so dreary, and feverish, that he tried to escape into a shadier field, and to force his way through a gap in the parched hedge, regardless of Farmer Burr's fences and restrictions.

On the other side of the hedge there was a smaller field, a hollow with long grasses and nut hedges and a little shade, and a ditch over which Trevithic sprang with some remnant of youthful spirit. He sprang, breaking through the briars and countless twigs and limp wreathed leaves, making a foot-standing for himself among the lank grasses and dull autumn flowers on the

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other side, and as he sprang he caught a sight of something lying in the ditch, something with half-open lips and dim glazed eyes, turned upwards under the crossing diamond network of the shadow and light of the briars.

What was this that was quite still, quite inanimate, lying in the sultry glow of the autumn day? Jack turned a little sick, and leapt back down among the dead leaves, and stooped over a wan helpless figure lying there motionless and ghastly, with its head sunk back in the dust and tangled weeds. It was only a worn and miserable-looking old man, whose meek, starved, weary face was upturned to the sky, whose wan lips were drawn apart, and whose thin hands were clutching at the weeds. Jack gently tried to loosen the clutch, and the poor fingers gave way in an instant and fell helplessly among the grasses, frightening a field-mouse back into its hole. But this helpless, loose fall first gave Trevithic some idea of life in the hopeless figure, for all its wan, rigid lines. He put his hand under the rags which covered the breast. There was no pulse at first, but presently the heart just fluttered, and a little colour came into the pale face, and there was a long sigh, and then the glazed eyes closed.

John set to work to rub the cold hands and the stiff body. It was all he could do, for people don't walk about with bottles of brandy and blankets in their pockets; but he rubbed and rubbed, and some of the magnetism of his own vigorous existence seemed to enter into the poor soul

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at his knees, and another faint flush of life came into the face, and the eyes opened this time naturally and bright, and the figure pointed faintly to its lips. Jack understood, and he nodded; gave a tug to the man's shoulders, and propped him up a little higher against the bank. Then he tied his handkerchief round the poor old bald head to protect it from the sun, and sprang up the side of the ditch. He had remembered a turnpike upon the highway, two or three hundred yards beyond the boundary of the next field.

Lady Kidderminster, who happened to be driving along that afternoon on her way to the Potlington flower-show, and who was leaning back comfortably under the hood of her great yellow barouche, was surprised to see from under the fringe of her parasol the figure of a man suddenly bursting through a hedge on the roadside, and waving a hat and shouting, red, heated, disordered, frantically signing to the coachman to stop.

'It's a Fenian!' screamed her ladyship.

'I think;—yes, it's Mr. Trevithic,' said her companion.

The coachman, too, had recognised Jack, and began to draw up; but the young man, who had now reached the side of the carriage, signed to him to go on.

'Will you give me a lift?' he said, gasping and springing on to the step. 'How d'ye do, Lady Kidderminster? I heard your wheels and made an effort,' and

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Jack turned rather pale. 'There is a poor fellow dying in a ditch. I want some brandy for him and some help; stop at the turnpike,' he shouted to the coachman, and then he turned with very good grace to Lady Kidderminster, aghast and not over-pleased. 'Pray forgive me,' he said. 'It was such a chance catching you. I never thought I should have done it. I was two fields off. Why, how d'ye do, Mrs. Myles?' And still holding on to the yellow barouche by one hand, he put out the other to his old acquaintance, Mary Myles, with the still kind eyes, who was sitting in state by the countess.

'You will take me back, and the brandy, I know?' said Trevithic.

'Is it anybody one knows?' said the countess.

'Only some tramp,' said Jack: 'but it's a mercy I met you.' And before they reached the turnpike, he had jumped down, and was explaining his wants to the bewildered old chip of a woman who collected the tolls.

'Your husband not here? a pity,' said John. 'Give me his brandy-bottle; it will be of some good for once.' And he disappeared into the lodge, saying,—'Would you please have the horses' heads turned, Lady Kidderminster?' In a minute he was out again. 'Here, put this in' (to the powdered footman), and John thrust a blanket off the bed, an old three-legged chair, a wash-jug full of water, and one or two more miscellaneous objects into the man's arms. 'Now back again,' he said, 'as quick

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as you can.' And he jumped in with his brandy; and the great barouche groaned, and at his command actually sped off once more along the road. 'Make haste,' said Trevithic; 'the man is dying for want of a dram.'

The sun blazed hot in their faces. The footman sat puzzled and disgusted on his perch, clasping the blanket and the water-jug. Lady Kidderminster was not sure that she was not offended by all the orders Mr. Trevithic was giving her servants; Mrs. Myles held the three-legged chair up on the seat opposite with her slender wrist, and looked kind and sympathetic; John hardly spoke,—he was thinking what would be best to do next.

'I am so sorry,' he said, 'but I am afraid you must wait for us, Lady Kidderminster. I'll bring him up as soon as I can, and we will drop him at the first cottage. You see nobody else may pass for hours.'

'We shall be very late for our fl——,' Lady Kidderminster began, faintly, and then stopped ashamed at the look in Trevithic's honest face which she saw reflected in Mrs. Myles' eyes.

'Oh, my dear Lady Kidderminster,' cried Mrs. Myles, bending forward from her nest of white muslins. 'We *must* wait.'

'Of course we will wait,' said Lady Kidderminster, hastily, as the coachman stopped at the gap through which Jack had first made his appearance. Trevithic was out in an instant.

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'Bring those things quick,' said Jack to the magnificent powder-and-plush man; and he set off running himself as hard as he could go, with his brandy-flask in one hand and the water-jug in the other.

For an instant the man hesitated and looked at his mistress, but Lady Kidderminster had now caught something of Mr. Trevithic's energy: she imperiously pointed to the three-legged chair, and Tomlins, who was good-natured in the main, seeing Jack's figure rapidly disappearing in the distance, began to run too, with his silken legs plunging wildly, for pumps and stubble are not the most comfortable of combinations. When Tomlins reached the ditch at last, Jack was pouring old Glossop's treacle-like brandy down the poor gasping tramp's throat, dashing water into his face and gradually bringing him to life again; the sun was streaming upon the two, the insects buzzing, and the church clock striking the half-hour.

There are combinations in life more extraordinary than pumps and ploughed fields. When Trevithic and Tomlins staggered up to the carriage carrying the poor old ragged, half-lifeless creature on the chair between them, the two be-satined and be-feathered ladies made way and helped them to put poor helpless old David Hopkins with all his rags into the soft-cushioned corner, and drove off with him in triumph to the little public at the entrance of Featherston, where they left him.

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'You have saved that man's life,' said Jack, as he said good-by to the two ladies. They left him standing, glad and excited, in the middle of the road, with bright eyes and more animation and interest in his face than there had been for many a day.

'My dear Jack, what is this I hear?' said Anne, when he got home. 'Have you been to the flower-show with Lady Kidderminster? Who was that in the carriage with her? What a state you are in.'

Jack told her his story, but Mrs. Trevithic scarcely listened. 'Oh,' said she, 'I thought you had been doing something pleasant. Mrs. Myles was very kind. It seems to me rather a fuss about nothing, but of course you know best.'

Little Dulcie saw her father looking vexed: she climbed up his leg and got on his knee, and put her round soft cheek against his. 'Sall I luboo?' said she.

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CHAPTER V.

BLUNDERBORE AND HIS TWO HEADS.

When Jack went to see his *protégé* next day, he found the old man sitting up in the bar warming his toes, and finishing off a basin of gruel and a tumbler of porter with which the landlady had supplied him. Mrs. Penfold was a frozen sort of woman, difficult to deal with, but kind-hearted when the thaw once set in, and though at first she had all but refused to receive poor old Davy into her house, having relented and opened her door to him she had warmed and comforted him, and brought him to life in triumph, and now looked upon him with a certain self-contained pride and satisfaction as a favourable specimen of her art.

'He's right eno',' said Mrs. Penfold, with a jerk of the head. 'Ye can go in and see him in the bar.' And Jack went in.

The bar was a comfortable little oaken refuge and haven for Miles and Hodge, where they stretched their stiff legs safe from the scoldings of their wives and the shrill cries of their children. The shadows of the sunny-

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latticed window struck upon the wooden floor, the fire burnt most part of the year on the stone hearth, where the dry branches and logs were crackling cheerfully, with a huge black kettle hissing upon the bars. Someone had christened it 'Tom,' and from its crooked old spout at any hour of the day a hot and sparkling stream went flowing into the smoking grog-glasses, and into Penfold's punch-pots and Mrs. Penfold's tea-cups and soup-pans.

Davy's story was a common one enough,—a travelling umbrella-mender—hard times—fine weather, no umbrellas to mend, and 'parasols ain't no good; so cheap they are,' he said, with a shake of the head: 'they ain't worth the mendin'.' Then an illness, and then the workhouse, and that was all his history.

'I ain't sorry I come out of the 'ouse; the ditch was the best place of the two,' said Davy. 'You picked me out of the ditch; you'd have left me in the 'ouse, sir, all along with the ruck. I don't blame ye,' Davy said; 'I see'd ye there for the first time when I was wuss off than I ever hope to be in this life again; ye looked me full in the face, and talked on with them two after ye—devil take them, and he will.'

'I don't remember you,' said John. 'Where was it?'

'Hammersley workus,' said Davy. 'Don't you remember Hammersley Union? I was in the bed under the winder, and I says to my pardner (there were two on us),

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says I,—"That chap looks as if he might do us a turn." "Not he," says my pardner. "They are werry charitable, and come and stare at us; that's all," says he, and he was right, you see, sir. He'd been in five years come Christmas, and knew more about it than I did then.'

'And you have left now?' said Trevithic, with a strange expression of pity in his face.

'So I 'ave, sir, I'm bound to say,' said Davy, finishing off his porter, 'and I'd rather die in the ditch any day than go back to that d—— place.'

'It looked clean and comfortable enough,' said Trevithic.

'Clean, comfirable!' said Davy. 'Do you think *I* minds a little dirt, sir? Did you look under the quilts? Why, the vermin was a-running all over the place like flies, so it were. It come dropping from the ceiling; and my pardner he were paralytic, and he used to get me to wipe the bugs off his face with a piece of paper. Shall I tell ye what it was like?' And old Davy, in his ire, began a history so horrible, so sickening, that Trevithic flushed up as he listened,—an honest flush and fire of shame and indignation.

'I tell you fairly I don't believe half you say,' said Jack, at last. 'It is too horrible and unnatural.'

'True there,' said Davy, comforted by his porter and his gruel. 'It ain't no great matter to me if you believes 'arf or not, sir. I'm out of that hole, and I ain't agoin'

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back. Maybe your good lady has an umbrella wants seeing to; shall I call round and ask this afternoon, sir?'

Jack nodded and said he might come if he liked, and went home, thinking over the history he had heard. It was one of all the histories daily told in the sunshine, of deeds done in darkness. It was one grain of seed falling into the ground and taking root. Jack felt a dull feeling of shame and sadness; an uncomfortable pricking as of a conscience which had been benumbed: a sudden pain of remorse, as he walked along the dusty lane which led to the vicarage. He found his wife in the drawing-room, writing little scented notes to some of her new friends, and accepting proffered dinners and teas and county hospitalities. Little Dulcie was lying on her back on a rug, and crooning and chattering; the shutters were closed; there was a whiff of roses and scented water. Coming in from the baking lanes, it was a pleasant contrast, a pretty home picture, all painted in cool whites and greys and shadows, and yet it had by degrees grown intolerable to him. Jack looked round, and up and down, and then with a sudden impulse he went up and took his wife's hand, and looked her full in the face. 'Anne,' he said, 'could you give up something for me—something, everything, except what is yours as a right? Dear, it is all so nice, but I am very unhappy here. May I give up this pretty home, and will you come and live with me where we can be of more use than we are here?' He

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looked so kind and so imploring, that for an instant Anne almost gave way and agreed to anything. There was a bright constraining power in Jack's blue eye which had to deal with magnetism, I believe, and which his wife was one of the few people to resist. She recovered herself almost immediately.

'How ridiculous you are, John,' she said, pettishly, 'Of course I will do anything in reason; but it seems to me very wrong and unnatural and ungrateful of you,' said Mrs. Trevithic, encouraging herself as she went on, 'not to be happy when you have so much to be thankful for; and though, of course, I should be the last to allude to it, yet I do think when I have persuaded papa to appoint you to this excellent living, considering how young you are and how much you owe to him, it is not *graceful*, to say the least, on your part . . . .'

John turned away and caught up little Dulcie, and began tossing her in the air. 'Well,' said he, 'we won't discuss this now. I have made up my mind to take a week's holiday,' he added, with a sort of laugh. 'I am going to stay with Frank Austin till Saturday. Will you tell them to pack up my things?'

'But, my dear, we are engaged to the Kidd . . . .'

'You must write and make my excuses,' Jack said wearily. 'I must go. I have some business at Hammersley.' And he left the room.

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Chances turn out so strangely at times that some people—women especially, who live quietly at home and speculate upon small matters—look on from afar and wonder among themselves as they mark the extraordinary chain-work of minute stitches by which the mighty machinery of the world works on. Men who are busy and about, here and there in life, are more apt to take things as they find them, and do not stop to speculate how this or that comes to be. It struck Jack oddly when he heard from his friend Frank Austin that the chaplain who had been elected instead of him at the workhouse was ill and obliged to go away for a time. 'He is trying to find someone to take his place, and to get off for a holiday,' said Mr. Austin. 'He is a poor sort of creature, and I don't think he has got on very well with the guardians.'

'I wonder,' said Trevithic, 'whether I could take the thing for a time? We might exchange, you know; I am tired of play, heaven knows. There is little enough to do at Featherston, and he might easily look after my flock while I take the work here off his hands.'

'I know you always had a hankering after those unsavoury flesh-pots,' Austin said, with a laugh. 'I should think Skipper would jump at your offer, and from all I hear there is plenty to be done here, if it is work you are in want of. Poor little Skipper did his best at one time; I believe he tried to collect a fund for some of the poor creatures who couldn't be taken in, but what is one small fish

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like him among so many guardians?' said Mr. Austin, indulging in one of those clerical jokes to which Mr. Trollope has alluded in his delightful Chronicles.

Jack wrote off to his bishop and to his wife by that day's post. Two different answers reached him; his wife's came next day, his bishop's three days later.

Poor Anne was frantic, as well she might be. 'Come to Hammersley for two months in the heat of the summer; bring little Dulcie; break up her home!—Never. Throw over Lady Kidderminster's Saturdays; admit a stranger to the vicarage!—Never. Was her husband out of his senses?' She was deeply, deeply hurt. He must come back immediately, or more serious consequences than he imagined might ensue.

Trevithic's eyes filled up with tears as he crumpled the note up in his hand and flung it across the room. It was for this he had sacrificed the hope of his youth, of his life,—for this. It was too late now to regret, to think of what another fate might have been. Marriage had done him this cruel service:—It had taught him what happiness might be, what some love might be, but it had withheld the sweetness of the fruit of the tree. If it had indeed disclosed the knowledge of good, it was through the very bitterness of the fruit that came to his share, that this unhappy Adam, outside the gates of the garden, realised what its ripe sweetness might have been.

Old Mr. Bellingham did not mend matters by writing

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like a trembling and long-winded remonstrance. Lady Kidderminster, to whom Anne had complained, pronounced Trevithic mad; she had had some idea of the kind, she said, that day when he behaved in that extraordinary manner in the lane.

'It's a benevolent mania,' said Lord Axminster, her eldest son.

Mrs. Myles shook her head, and began, 'He is not mad, most noble lady. . . .' Mrs. Trevithic, who was present, flushed up with resentment at Mrs. Myles venturing to interpose in Jack's behalf. She did not look over-pleased when Mrs. Myles added that she should meet Mr. Trevithic probably when she went from thence to stay at Hammersley with her cousin, Mrs. Garnier.

Jack, who was in a strange determined mood, meanwhile wrote back to his wife to say that he felt that it was all very hard upon her; that he asked it from her goodness to him and her wifely love; that he would make her very happy if she would only consent to come, and if not she must go to her father's for a few weeks until he had got this work done. 'Indeed it is no sudden freak, dear,' he wrote. 'I had it in my mind before'—(John hesitated here for a minute and took his pen off the paper)—'that eventful day when I walked up to the rectory, and saw you and learnt to know you.' So he finished his sentence. But his heart sank as he posted the letter. Ah me! he had dreamed a different dream.

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If his correspondence with his wife did not prosper as it should have done, poor Trevithic was greatly cheered by the bishop's letter, which not only gave consent to this present scheme, but offered him, if he wished for more active duty, the incumbency of St. Bigots in the North, which would shortly be vacant in Hammersley, and which, although less valuable than his present living as far as the income was concerned, was much more so as regards the souls to be saved, which were included in the bargain.

New brooms sweep clean, says the good old adage. After he took up his residence at St. Magdalene's, Jack's broomstick did not begin to sweep for seven whole days. He did not go back to Featherston; Anne had left for Sandsea; and Mr. Skipper was in possession of the rectory, and Trevithic was left in that of 500 paupers in various stages of misery and decrepitude, and of a two-headed creature called Bulcox, otherwise termed the master and the matron of the place. Jack waited; he felt that if he began too soon he might ruin everything, get into trouble, stir up the dust, which had been lying so thickly, and make matters worse than before; he waited, watched, looked about him, asked endless questions, to not one of which the poor folks dared give a truthful answer. 'Nurse was werry kind, that she was, and most kinsiderate, up any time o' night and day,' gasped poor wretches, whose last pinch of tea had just been violently appropriated by 'nurse' with the fierce eyebrows sitting over the fire,

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and who would lie for hours in an agony of pain before they dared awaken her from her weary sleep. For nurse, whatever her hard rapacious heart might be, was only made of the same aching bones and feeble flesh as the rest of them. 'Everybody was kind and good, and the mistress came round reg'lar and ast them what they wanted. The tea was not so nice, perhaps, as it *might* be, but they was not wishin' to complain.' So they moaned on for the first three days. On the fourth, one or two cleverer and more truthful than the rest began to whisper that 'nurse' sometimes indulged in a drop too much; that she had been very unmanageable the night before, had boxed poor Tilly's ears —poor simpleton. They all loved Tilly, and didn't like to see her hurt. See, there was the bruise on her cheek; and Tilly, a woman of thirty, but a child in her ways, came shyly up in a pinafore, with a doll in one arm and a finger in her mouth. All the old hags sitting on their beds smiled at her as she went along. This poor witless Tilly was the pet of the ward, and they did not like to have her beaten. Trevithic was affected, he brought Tilly some sugar-plums in his pocket, and the old toothless crones brightened up and thanked him, nodding their white night-caps encouragingly from every bed.

At the end of two days John sickened; the sights, the smells, the depression of spirits produced by this vast suffering mass of his unlucky brothers and sisters, was too much for him, and for a couple of days he took to his bed.

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The matron came to see him twice; she took an interest in this cheerful new element, sparkling still with full reflection of the world outside. She glanced admiringly at his neatly appointed dressing-table, the silver top to his shaving-gear, and the ivory brushes.

John was feverish and thirsty, and was draining a bottle of mirky-looking water when Mrs. Bulcox came into the room on the second day.

'What is that you are drinking there, sir?' said she. 'My goodness, it's the water from the tap,—we never touch it! I'll send you some of ours; the tap-water comes through the cesspool, and is as nasty as nasty can be.'

'Is it what they habitually drink here?' Trevithic asked, languidly.

'They're used to it,' said Mrs. Bulcox; 'nothing hurts them.'

Jack turned away with an impatient movement, and Mrs. Bulcox went off indignant at his want of courtesy. The fact was, that Jack already knew more of the Bulcox's doings than they had any conception of, poor wretches, as they lay snoring the comfortable sleep of callousness on their snug pillows. 'I don't 'alf like that chap,' Mr. Bulcox had remarked to his wife, and Mrs. Bulcox had heartily echoed the misgiving. 'I go to see him when he is ill,' said she, 'and he cuts me off as sharp as anything. What business has he comin' prying and spying about the place?'

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What indeed! The place oppressed poor Jack, tossing on his bed; it seemed to close in upon him, the atmosphere appeared to be full of horrible moans and suggestions. In his normal condition Jack would have gone to sleep like a top, done his best, troubled his head no more on the subject of troubles he could not relieve; but just now he was out of health, out of spirits—although his darling desire was his—and more susceptible to nervous influences and suggestions than he had ever been in his life before. This night especially he was haunted and overpowered by the closeness and stillness of his room. It looked out through bars into a narrow street, and a nervous feeling of imprisonment and helplessness came over him so strongly that, to shake it off, he jumped up at last and partly dressed himself, and began to pace up and down the room. The popular history of Jack the Giant-Killer gives a ghastly account of the abode of Blunderbore; it describes 'an immense room where lay the limbs of the people lately seized and devoured,' and Blunderbore, 'with a horrid grin,' telling Jack 'that men's hearts eaten with pepper and vinegar were his nicest food. The giant then locked Jack up,' says the history, 'and went to fetch a friend.'

Poor Trevithic felt something in Jack's position when the gates were closed for the night, and he found himself shut in with his miserable companions. He could

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from his room hear the bolts and the bars and the grinding of the lock, and immediately a longing would seize him to get out.

To-night, after pacing up and down, he at last took up his hat and a light in his hand, and opened his door and walked downstairs to assure himself of his liberty and get rid of this oppressive feeling of confinement. He passed the master's door and heard his snores, and then he came to the lower door opening into the inner court. The keys were in it—it was only locked on the inside. As Jack came out into the court-yard he gave a great breath of relief; the stars were shining thickly overhead, very still, very bright; the place seemed less God-forgotten than when he was up there in his bedroom: the fresh night-air blew in his face and extinguished his light. He did not care, he put it down in a corner by the door, and went on into the middle of the yard and looked all round about him. Here and there from some of the windows a faint light was burning and painting the bars in gigantic shadows upon the walls; and at the end of the court, from what seemed like a grating to a cellar, some dim rays were streaming upward. Trevithic was surprised to see a light in such a place, and he walked up to see, and then he turned quickly away, and if like uncle Toby he swore a great oath at the horrible sight he saw, it was but an expression of honest pity and most Christian charity. The grating was a double grating, and looked into two

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cellars which were used as casual wards when the regular ward was full. The sight Trevithic saw is not one that I can describe here. People have read of such things as they are and were only a little while ago when the *Pall Mall Gazette* first published that terrible account which set people talking and asking whether such things should be and could be still.

Old Davy had told him a great many sad and horrible things, but they were not so sad or so horrible as the truth, as Jack now saw it. Truth, naked, alas! covered with dirt and vermin, shuddering with cold, moaning with disease, and heaped and tossed in miserable uneasy sleep at the bottom of her foul well. Every now and then a voice broke the darkness, or a cough or a moan reached him from the sleepers above. Jack did not improve his night's rest by his midnight wandering.

Trevithic got well, however, next day, dressed himself, and went down into the little office which had been assigned to him. His bedroom was over the gateway of the workhouse and looked into the street. From his office he had only a sight of the men's court, the wooden bench, the stone steps, the grating. Inside was a stove and green drugget, a little library of books covered with greasy brown paper for the use of those who could read. There was not much to comfort or cheer him, and as he sat there he began to think a little disconsolately of his pleasant home, with its clean comfortable appointments,

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the flowers round the window, the fresh chintzes, and, above all, the dear little round face upturned to meet him at every coming home.

It would not do to think of such things, and Jack put them away, but he wished that Anne had consented to come to him. It seemed hard to be there alone—him a father and a husband, with belongings of his own. Trevithic, who was still weak and out of sorts, found himself making a little languid castle in the air, of crooked places made straight, of whited sepulchres made clean, of Dulcie, grown tall and sensible, coming tapping at his door to cheer him when he was sad, and encourage him when he was weary.

Had the fever come back, and could it be that he was wandering? It seemed to him that all the heads of the old men he could see through the grating were turning, and that an apparition was passing by—an apparition, gracious, smiling, looking in through the bars of his window, and coming gently knocking at his door; and then it opened, and a low voice said,—'It's me, Mr. Trevithic—Mrs. Myles; may I come in?' and a cool grey phantom stepped into the dark little room.

Jack gladly welcomed his visitor, and brought out his shabby old leather chair for her; but Mrs. Myles would not sit down, she had only come for a minute.

'How ill you are looking,' Mary said, compassionately. 'I came to ask you to come back and dine with us; I am

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only here for a day or two with my cousin Fanny Garnier. She visits this place, and brought me, and I thought of asking for you; and do come, Mr. Trevithic. These—these persons showed me the way to your study.' And she looked back at the grinning old heads that were peeping in at the door. Mary Myles looked like the lady in *Comus*—so sweet, and pure, and fair, with the grotesque faces peering and whispering all about her. They vanished when Trevithic turned, and stood behind the door watching and chattering like apes, for the pretty lady to come out again. 'I cannot tell you how glad we are that you have come here, Mr. Trevithic,' said Mrs. Myles. 'Poor Fanny has half broken her heart over the place, and Mr. Skipper was so hopeless that it was no use urging him to appeal. You will do more good in a week than he has done in a year. I must not wait now,' Mrs. Myles added. 'You will come, won't you?—at seven; we have so much to say to you. Here is the address.'

As soon as Jack had promised to come, she left him, disappearing with her strange little court hobbling after her to the very gate of the dreary place.

Jack was destined to have more than one visitor that afternoon. As he still sat writing busily at his desk in the little office, a tap came at the door. It was a different apparition this time, for an old woman's head peeped in, and an old nutcracker-looking body, in her charity-

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girl's livery, staggered feebly into his office and stood grinning slyly at him. 'She came to borrow a book,' she said. 'She couldn't read, not she, but, law bless him, that was no matter.' Then she hesitated. 'He had been speaking to Mike Rogers that morning. You wouldn't go and get us into trouble,' said the old crone, with a wistful, doubtful scanning interrogation of the eyes; 'but I am his good lady, and 'ave been these thirty years, and it do seem hard upon the gals, and if you could speak the word, sir, and get them out. . . . .'

'Out?' said Jack.

'From the black kitchen—so they name it,' said the old crone, mysteriously: 'the cellar under the master's stairs. Kate Hill has been in and out a week come yesterday. I knowed her grandmother, poor soul. She shouldn't have spoke tighty to the missis; but she is young and don't know no better, and my good man and me was thinking if maybe you could say a word, sir—as if from yourself. Maybe you heard her as you went upstairs, sir; for we know our cries *is* 'eard.'

So this was it. The moans in the air were not fancy, the complainings had been the real complaints of some one in suffering and pain.

'Here is the book,' said Jack, suddenly; 'and I'm afraid you can have no more snuff, ma'am.' And with a start poor old Betty Rogers nearly stumbled over the matron, who was standing at his door.

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'Well, what is it you're wanting now?' said Mrs. Bulcox. 'You mustn't allow them to come troubling you, Mr. Trevithic.'

'I am not here for long, Mrs. Bulcox,' said Jack, shrugging his shoulders. 'While I stay I may as well do all I can for these poor creatures.'

A gleam of satisfaction came into Mrs. Bulcox's face at the notion of his approaching departure. He had been writing all the morning, covering sheets and sheets of paper. He had been doing no harm, and she felt she could go out for an hour with her Bulcox, with an easy mind.

As Mr. and Mrs. Bulcox came home together, Jack, who was looking from his bedroom window, saw them walking up the street. He had put up his sheets of paper in an envelope, and stamped it, and addressed it. He had not wasted his time during their absence, and he had visited a part of the workhouse unknown to him before, having bribed one pauper and frightened another into showing him the way. Mr. Bulcox coming under the window heard Jack calling to him affably. 'Would you be so kind as to post this packet for me?' cried Jack. The post-box was next door to the workhouse. 'Thank you,' he said, as Mr. Bulcox picked up the thick letter which came falling to the ground at his feet. It was addressed to Colonel the Hon. Charles Hambledon, Lowndes Square, London. 'Keeps very 'igh company,'

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said Bulcox to his wife, and he felt quite pleased to post a letter addressed to so distinguished a personage.

'Thank you,' said Jack again, looking very savagely pleased and amused; 'it was of importance.' He did not add that it was a letter to the editor of the *Jupiter*, who was a friend of his friend's. Trevithic liked the notion of having got Bulcox to fix the noose round his own neck. He felt ashamed of the part he was playing, but he did not hurry himself for that. It was necessary to know all, in order to sweep clean once he began. Poor Kate Hill still in durance received a mysterious and encouraging message, and one or two comforts were smuggled in to her by her gaoler. On the Wednesday morning his letter would appear in the *Jupiter*—nothing more could be done until then. Next day was Tuesday: he would go over to Sandsea and talk Anne into reason, and get back in time for the board; and in the meantime Jack dressed himself and went to dine with the widows.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE PARCÆ CUT A THREAD OF MRS. TREVITHIC'S KNITTING.

MRS. MYLES' cousin, Mrs. Garnier, lived in a quaint, comfortable-looking low house on the Chester high road, with one or two bow-windows and gables standing out for no apparent reason, and a gallery upstairs, with four or five windows, which led to the drawing-room.

The two widows were very fond of one another and often together; there was a similarity in tastes and age and circumstance. The chief difference in their fate had been this—that Fanny Garnier had loved her husband, although she could not agree with him—for loving and agreeing do not go together always—and Mary Myles' married life had been at best a struggle for indifference and forgiveness; she was not a very easily moulded woman; she could do no more than forgive and repent her own ill-doing in marrying as she did.

The trace of their two lives was set upon the cousins. A certain coldness and self-reliance, a power of living for to-day and forgetting, was the chief gift that had come to Mary Myles out of the past experience of her life.

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Fanny Garnier was softer, more impressionable, more easily touched and assimilated by the people with whom she came in contact; she was less crisp and bright than Mary, and older, though she was the same age. She had loved more and sorrowed more, and people remember their sorrows in after-years when their angers are forgotten and have left only a blank in their minds.

George Garnier, Fanny Garnier's husband, had belonged to that sect of people who have an odd fancy in their world for making themselves and other folks as miserable as they possibly can—for worrying and wearying and torturing, for doubting and trembling, for believing far more eagerly in justice (or retribution, which is their idea of justice) than in mercy. Terror has a strange morbid attraction for these folks—mistrust, for all they say, seems to be the motive power of their lives: they gladly offer pain and tears and penitence as a ghastly propitiation. They are of all religions and creeds; they are found with black skins and woolly heads, building up their altars and offering their human sacrifices in the unknown African deserts; they are chipping and chopping themselves before their emerald-nosed idols, who sit squatting in unclean temples; they are living in the streets and houses all round about us, in George Garnier's pleasant old cottage outside the great Hammersley city, or at number five, and six, and seven in our street, as the case may be; in the convent at Bayswater, in the manses and presby-

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teries. You or I may belong to the fraternity, so did many a better man, as the children say. St. Simon Stylites, Athanasius, John Calvin, Milton, Ignatius Loyola, Savonarola, not to speak of Saints A, B, C, D, and E.

Mary poured Jack out a big cup of strong tea, and brought it across the lamp-lit room to him with her own white hands. Mrs. Garnier shivered as she heard his story. The tea smoked, the lamps burnt among the flower-stands, the wood-fire blazed cheerfully, for Mrs. Garnier was a chilly and weak-minded person, and lit her fire all the year round, more or less. Trevithic, comfortably sunk back in a big arm-chair, felt a grateful sense of ease and rest and consolation. The atmosphere of the little house was so congenial and fragrant, the two women were such sympathising listeners; Mary Myles' bright eyes lighted with such kindly interest; while Mrs. Garnier, silent, available, sat with her knitting under the shade of the lamp. The poor fellow was not insensible to these soothing influences. As he talked on, it seemed to him that for the first time in his life he had realised what companionship and sympathy might mean. Something invisible, harmonious, delicate, seemed to drive away from him all thought of sin or misery and turmoil when in company with these two kind women. This was what a home might have been—a warm, flower scented, lamp-twinkling haven, with sweet still eyes to respond and

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brighten at his success and to cheer his failing efforts. This was what it never, never would be, and Trevithic put the thought away. It was dangerous ground for the poor heart-weary fellow, longing for peace and home, comfort and love; whereas Anne, to whom he was bound to look for these good things, was at Sandsea, fulfilling every duty of civilised life, and not greatly troubled for her husband, but miserable on her own account, hard and vexed and deeply offended.

Mrs. Trevithic was tripping along the south cliff on the afternoon of the next day, when the sound of footsteps behind her made her stop and look round. As she saw that it was her husband coming towards her, her pale face turned a shade more pale.

'Oh, how d'ye do?' Anne said. 'I did not expect you. Have you come for long?' And she scarcely waited for him to come up to her, but began to walk on immediately.

Poor John; what a coming home! He arrived with his various interests, his reforms, his forthcoming letter in the *Jupiter;* there was the offer of the bishop's in his pocket—the momentary gladness and elation of return—and this was all he had come back to!

'Have you come on business?' Mrs. Trevithic asked.

'I wanted to see you and Dulcie,' John answered;

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'that was my business. Time seems very long without you both. All this long time I have only had Mrs. Myles to befriend me. I wish—I wish you would try to like the place, too, Anne. Those two ladies seem very happy there.'

'Mrs. Myles, I have no doubt,' said Anne bitterly. 'No,' she cried, 'you need not talk so to me. I know too much, too much, too much,' she said, with something like real pathos in her voice.

'My dearest Anne, what do you mean?' Trevithic said, kindly, hurrying after her, for she was walking very fast.

'It is too late. I cannot forgive you. I am not one of those people who can forget easily and forgive. Do you think I do not know that your love is not mine—never was—never will be mine? Do you think gossip never reaches me here, far away, though I strive to live in peace and away from it all? And you dare mention Mary Myles' name to me—you dare—you dare!' cried Anne, in her quick fierce manner.

'Of course I dare,' said Trevithic. 'Enough of this, Anne,' and he looked as hard as Anne herself for a minute; then he melted. 'Dear Anne, if something has failed in our home hitherto, let us forgive one another and make a new start in life. Listen,' and he pulled out the bishop's letter, with the offer of St. Bigots, and read it to her. 'I need not tell you how much I wish for this.'

His wife did not answer. At first he thought she was

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relenting. She went a little way down the side of the cliff and waited for him, and then suddenly turned upon him. The wash of the sea seemed to flow in time with her words.

'You are cruel—yes, cruel!' said Anne, trembling very much, and moved for once out of her calm. 'You think I can bear anything—I cannot bear your insults any longer! I must go—leave you. Yes, listen to me, I *will* go, I tell you! My father will keep me here, me and little Dulcie, and you can have your own way, John, and go where you like. You love your own way better than anything else in the world, and it will make up to you for the home which, as you say, has been a failure on the whole.' And Mrs. Trevithic tried to choke down a gulp of bitter angry tears.

As she spoke John remembered a time not so very long ago, when Anne had first sobbed out she loved him, and when the tears which she should have gulped away had been allowed to overflow into those bitter waters of strife—alas! neither of them could have imagined possible until now.

They had been walking side by side along the beach, the parson trudging angrily a little a-head, with his long blackcoat flapping and swinging against his legs; Anne skimming along skilfully after him, with her quick slender footsteps; but as she went along she blamed him in her heart for every roughness and inequality of the shore, and

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once when she struck her foot against a stone her ire rose sore against him. Little Dulcie from the rectory garden spied them out afar off, and pointed and capered to attract their attention; but the father and mother were too much absorbed in their own troubles to heed her, even if they could have descried her small person among the grasses and trees.

'You mean to say,' said Jack, stopping short suddenly, and turning round and speaking with a faint discordant jar in his voice, 'that you want to leave me, Anne?'

'Yes,' said Anne, quite calm and composed, with two glowing cheeks that alone showed that a fire of some sort was smouldering within. 'Yes, John, I mean it. I have not been happy. I have not succeeded in making you happy. I think we should both be better people apart than together. I never, never felt so—so ashamed of myself in all my life as since I have been married to you. I will stay here with papa. You have given up your living; you can now go and fulfil those duties which are more to you than wife or children or home.' Anne—who was herself again by this time—calmly rolled up her parasol as she spoke, and stood waiting for an answer. I think she expected a tender burst of remonstrance from her husband, a pathetic appeal, an abandonment possibly of the mad scheme which filled her with such unspeakable indignation. She had not counted on his silence. John stopped short a second time, and stood staring at the sea.

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He was cut to the heart; cruelly stunned and shocked and wounded by the pain, so that he had almost forgotten his wife's presence, or what he should say, or anything but the actual suffering that he was enduring. It seemed like a revelation of a horrible secret to which he had been blind all along. It was like a curse falling upon his home—undreamt of for a time, and suddenly realised. A great swift hatred flamed up in his heart against the calm and passive creature who had wrought it—who was there before him waiting for his assent to her excellent arrangements; a hatred, indeed, of which she was unworthy and unconscious; for Anne was a woman of slow perception. It took a long time for her to realise the effect of her words, or to understand what was passing in other people's minds. She was not more annoyed now with Trevithic than she had been for a long time past. She had no conception of the furies of scorn and hatred which were battling and tearing at the poor fellow's kind heart; she had not herself begun to respond even to her own emotions; and so she stood quite quietly, expecting, like some stupid bird by the water's edge, waiting for the wave to overwhelm her. 'Do you not agree with me?' she said at last. Trevithic was roused by his wife's question, and answered it. 'Yes; just as you wish,' he said, in an odd, cracked voice, with a melancholy jar in it. 'Just as you like, Anne.' And without looking at her again, he began once more to tramp along the shingle, crushing the

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pebbles under his feet as he went. The little stones started and rolled away under his impatient tread. Anne from habit followed him, without much thinking where she was going, or what aim she had in so doing; but she could not keep up with his strong progress—the distance widened and widened between them. John walked farther away, while Mrs. Trevithic following after, trying in vain to hasten her lagging steps, grew sad and frightened all at once as she saw him disappearing in the distance. And then it was her turn to realise what she had done. Seeing her husband go, this poor woman began to understand at last that her foolish longing was granted.

Her feet failed, her heart sank, her courage died away all suddenly. Like a flame blown out, all the fire of her vexation and impatience was gone, and only a dreary nothing remained. And more hard to bear even than the troubles, the pains, the aches, the longings of life, are its blanks and its wants. Outer darkness, with the tormenting fires and the companion devils, is not the outer darkness that has overwhelmed most hearts with terror and apprehension. No words, no response, silence, abandonment—to us weak, loving, longing human creatures, that is the worst fate of all.

Anne became very tired, struggling after Trevithic Little by little she began to realise that she had sent him away, and he was going. A gull flapped across her path and frightened her. She could see him still; he had not

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yet turned up the steps from the cliff to the rectory garden, but he was gone as certainly as if she could no longer see him. And then she began to learn in a void of incredulous amaze, poor sluggish soul, that life was hard, very hard, and terribly remorseless; that when you strike, the blow falls; that what you wish is not always what you want; that it is easy to call people to you once perhaps, and to send them away once, but that when they come they stay, and when they go they are gone and all is over. Why was he so headstrong, so ungrateful, so unreasonable? Was she not right to blame him? and had he not owned himself to be in the wrong? Ah, poor wife, poor wife! Something choking and blinding seemed to smite the unhappy woman in her turn. She reached the steps at last that led up the cliff to the rectory garden where little Dulcie had been playing when her mother left her. Anne longed to find her there—to clutch her in her poor aching arms, and cover her sweet little rosy face with kisses. 'Dulcie,' she called, 'Dulcie, Dulcie!' her voice echoing so sadly that it struck herself, but Dulcie's cheery little scream of gladness did not answer, and Anne —who took this silence as a bad omen—felt her heart sink lower. In a vague way she thought that if she could have met Dulcie all would have been well.

She was calling still, when someone answered; figures came to the hall-door, half-a-dozen officious hands were outstretched, and friendly greetings met her. There was

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Miss Triquett who was calling with Miss Moineaux, and Miss Simmonds who had driven up in her basket-carriage, and old Mr. Bellingham trying in a helpless way to entertain his visitresses, and to make himself agreeable to them all. The old gentleman, much relieved at the sight of his daughter, called her to him with a cheerful, 'Ah, my dear, here you are. I shall now leave these ladies in better hands than mine. I am sorry to say I have a sermon to write.' And Mr. Bellingham immediately and benevolently trotted away.

With the curious courage of women, and long habitude, Mrs. Trevithic took off her hat and smoothed her straight hair, and sat down, and mechanically began to make conversation for the three old ladies who established themselves comfortably in the pleasant bow-windowed drawing-room and prepared for a good chat. Miss Simmonds took the sofa as her right (as I have said before, size has a certain precedence of its own). Miss Triquett, as usual, rapidly glanced round the apartment, took in the importation of work-boxes, baskets, toy-boxes, &c., which Anne's arrival had scattered about, the trimming on Mrs. Trevithic's dress, the worn lines under her eyes. Mrs. Trevithic took her knitting from one of the baskets, and rang the bell and desired the man to find Miss Dulcie and send her; and meanwhile the stream of conversation flowed on uninterruptedly. Mr. Trevithic was well. Only come for a day! And the little girl? Thanks—yes. Little Dulcie's

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cold had been severe—linseed-poultices, squills, ipecacuanha wine;—thanks, yes. Mrs. Trevithic was already aware of their valuable medicinal properties. Mr. Pelligrew, the present curate, had sprained his thumb in the pulpit door—wet bandages, &c. &c. Here Miss Simmonds, whose eyes had been fixed upon this window all the time, suddenly exclaimed,—

'How fond your husband is of that dear child Dulcie, Mrs. Trevithic! There she is with her papa in the garden.'

'Dear me!' said Triquett, stretching her long neck and lighting up with excitement. 'Mr. Trevithic must be going away; you never told us. He is carrying a carpet-bag.'

As she spoke, Anne, who had been sitting with her back to the window, started up, and her knitting fell off her lap. She was irresolute for an instant. He could not be going—going like that, without a word. No, she would not follow him.

'O dear me!' said Miss Simmonds, who had been trying to hook up the little rolling ball of worsted with the end of her parasol, 'just see what I have done.' And she held the parasol up spindle-fashion with the long entangled thread twisted round it.

'I think I can undo it,' said Miss Moineaux.

'I beg your pardon, I—I want to speak to my hus-

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band,' said Mrs. Trevithic, all of a sudden starting up and running to the door.

'He is going,' said Miss Triquett to the others, looking once more out through the big pleasant window, as Anne left the room. 'Dear Miss Moineaux, into what a mess you have got that knitting; here are some scissors—let me cut the thread.'

'Poor thing! she is too late,' said Miss Moineaux, letting the two ends of the thread fall to the ground.

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CHAPTER VII

IN BLUNDERBORE'S CASTLE.

WHEN Jack first made the acquaintance of the board on the Wednesday after he first came to the workhouse, the seven or eight gentlemen sitting round the green table greeted him quite as one of themselves as he came into the room. This was a dull September morning; the mist seemed to have oozed in through the high window and continually-opening door. When Jack passed through the outer or entrance room, he saw a heap of wistful faces and rags already waiting for admittance, some women and some children, a man with an arm in a sling, one or two workhouse *habitués*–there was no mistaking the hard coarse faces. Two old paupers were keeping watch at the door, and officiously flung it open for him to pass in. The guardians had greeted him very affably on the previous occasion,—a man of the world, a prosperous but eccentric vicar, was not to be treated like an everyday curate and chaplain. 'Ah, how-d'ye-do, Mr. Trevithic?' said the half-pay Captain, the chairman. The gas-fitter cleared his throat and made a sort of an attempt at a bow. The wholesale

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grocer rubbed his two hands together,—Pitchley his name was, I think—for some reason or other, he exercised great influence over the rest. But on this second Wednesday morning the *Jupiter* had come out with an astounding letter—about themselves, their workhouse, their master, their private paupers. It was a day they never forgot, and the natural indignation of the board overflowed.

Perhaps Jack would have done better had he first represented matters to them, but he knew that at least two of the guardians were implicated. He was afraid of being silenced and of having the affair hushed up. He cared not for the vials of their wrath being emptied upon him so long as they cleansed the horrible place in their outpour. He walked in quite brisk and placid to meet the storm. The guardians had not all seen the *Jupiter* as they came dropping in. Oker, the gasman, was late, and so was Pitchley as it happened, and when they arrived Jack was already standing in his pillory and facing the indignant chairman.

'My friend Colonel Hambledon wrote the letter from notes which I gave him,' said Jack. 'I considered publicity best;—under the circumstances, I could not be courteous,' he said, 'if I hoped to get through this disagreeable business at all effectually. I could not have selected any one of you gentlemen as confidants in common fairness to the others. I wished the enquiry to be

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complete and searching. I was obliged to brave the consequences.'

'Upon my word I think you have acted right,' said one of the guardians, a doctor, a bluff old fellow who liked frank speaking. But an indignant murmur expressed the dissent of the other members of the board.

'I have been here a fortnight,' said Jack. 'I had not intended speaking so soon of what I now wish to bring before your notice, but the circumstances seem to me so urgent and so undoubted that I can see no necessity for deferring my complaint any longer.'

'Dear me, sir,' said the gas-fitter, coming in, 'I 'ope there's nothink wrong?'

'Everything, more or less,' said Trevithic, quietly. 'In the first place, I wish to bring before you several cases of great neglect on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Bulcox.'

Here the chairman coloured up. 'I think, Mr. Trevithic, we had better have the master present if you have any complaint to lodge against him.'

'By all means,' said Trevithic, impassively; and he turned over his notes while one of the trembling old messengers went off for the master.

The master arrived and the matron too. 'How-d'ye-do, Bulcox?' said the chairman. Mrs. Bulcox dropped a respectful sort of curtsey, and Trevithic immediately began without giving time for the others to speak. He turned upon the master.

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'I have a complaint to lodge against you and Mrs. Bulcox, and at the chairman's suggestion I waited for you to be present.'

'Against me, sir?' said Bulcox, indignantly.

'Against me and Mr. Bulcox?' said the woman, with a bewildered, injured, saint-like sort of swoop.

'Yes,' Jack answered, curtly.

'Have you seen the letter in the *Jupiter?*' said the chairman gravely to Mr. Bulcox.

'Mr. Bulcox was good enough to post the letter himself,' Jack interposed, briskly. 'It was to state, what I honestly believe to be the fact, that I consider that you, Mr. Bulcox, are totally unfit for your present situation as master. I am aware that you have good friends among these gentlemen, and that, as far as they can tell, your conduct has always been a model of deference and exemplariness. Now,' said Jack, 'with the board's permission I will lodge my complaints against you in form.' And here Trevithic pulled out his little book, and read out as follows:—

'1. That the management and economy of this workhouse are altogether disgraceful.

'2. That you have been guilty of cruelty to two or three of the inmates.

'3. That you have embezzled or misapplied certain sums of money allowed to you for the relief of the sick paupers under your care.'

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But here the chairman, guardians, master and mistress, would hear no more; all interrupted Trevithic at once.

'Really, sir, you must substantiate such charges as these. Leave the room' (to the messengers at the door).

'I cannot listen to such imputations,' from the master.

'What have we done to you that you should say such cruel, false things?' from the mistress. 'Oh, sir,' (to the chairman,) 'turn him away; say you don't believe him.'

'If you will come with me now,' Jack continued, addressing the guardians, 'I think I can prove some of my statements. Do you know that the little children here are crying with hunger? Do you know that the wine allowed for the use of the sick has been regularly appropriated by these two wretches?' cried Trevithic, in an honest fury. 'Do you know that people here are lying in their beds in misery, at this instant, who have not been moved or touched for weeks and weeks; that the nurses follow the example of those who are put over them, and drink, and ill-use their patients; that the food is stinted, the tea is undrinkable, the meat is bad and scarcely to be touched; that the very water flows from a foul cesspool; that at this instant, in a cellar in the house, there are three girls shut up, without beds or any conceivable comfort,—one has been there four days and nights, another has been shut up twice in one week in darkness and unspeakable

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misery? Shall I tell you the crime of this culprit? She spoke saucily to the matron, and this is her punishment. Will you come with me now, and see whether or not I have been speaking the truth?'

There was not one word he could not substantiate. He had not been idle all this time, he had been collecting his proofs,—ghastly proofs they were.

The sight of the three girls brought blinded and staggering out of the cellar had more effect than all the statements and assertions which Mr. Trevithic had been at such great pains to get together. The Bulcoxes were doomed; of this there could be no doubt. They felt it themselves as they plodded across the yard with the little mob of excited and curious guardians. Oker, the gas-fitter, took their part, indeed, so did the grocer. The old doctor nearly fell upon the culprits then and there. The rest of the guardians seemed to be divided in their indignation against Jack for telling, against Bulcox for being found out, against the paupers for being ill-used, for being paupers; against the reporter for publishing such atrocious libels. It was no bed of roses that Trevithic had made for himself.

A special meeting was convened for the end of the week.

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CHAPTER VIII.

MARY.

As years go by, and we see more of life and of our fellow-creatures, the by-play of existence is curiously unfolded to us, and we may, if we choose, watch its threads twisting and untwisting, flying apart, and coming together. People rise from their sick-beds, come driving up in carriages, come walking along the street into each other's lives. As A. trips along by the garden-wall, Z. at the other end of the world, perhaps, is thinking that he is tired of this solitary bushman's life; he was meant for something better than sheep-shearing and driving convicts, and he says to himself that he will throw it all up and go back to England, and see if there is not bread enough left in the old country to support one more of her sons. Here, perhaps, A. stoops to pick a rose, and places it in her girdle, and wonders whether that is C. on the rough pony riding along the road from market. As for Z., A. has never even conceived the possibility of his existence. But by this time Z. at the other end of the world has made up his mind, being a man of quick and determined action,

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and poor C.'s last chance is over, and pretty A., with the rose in her girdle, will never be his. Or it may be that Z., after due reflection, likes the looks of his tallows, X. and Y. come to the station, which had hitherto only been visited by certain very wild-looking letters of the alphabet, with feathers in their heads, and faces streaked with white paint, and A. gives her rose to C., who puts it in his button-hole with awkward country gallantry, quite unconscious of the chance they have both run that morning, and that their fate has been settled for them at the other end of the world.

When my poor A. burst into tears at the beginning of this story, another woman, who should have been Trevithic's wife, as far as one can judge speaking of such matters, a person who could have sympathised with his ambitions and understood the direction of his impulses, a woman with enough enthusiasm and vigour in her nature to carry her bravely through the tangles and difficulties which only choked and scratched and tired out poor Anne—this person, who was not very far off at the time, and no other than Mary Myles, said to someone who was with her—and she gave a pretty sad smile and quick shake of the head as she spoke,—

'No, it is no use. I have nothing but friendliness, a horrible, universal feeling of friendliness, left for any of my fellow-creatures. I will confess honestly' (and here she lost her colour a little) 'I did wrong once. I

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married my husband for a home—most people know how I was punished, and what a miserable home it was. I don't mind telling you, Colonel Hambledon, for you well understand how it is that I must make the best of my life in this arid and lonely waste to which my own fault has brought me.'

Mrs. Myles' voice faltered as she spoke, and she hung her head to hide the tears which had come into her eyes. And Colonel Hambledon took this as an answer to a question he had almost asked her, and went away. 'If ever you should change your mind,' he said, 'you would find me the same a dozen years hence.' And Mary only sighed and shook her head.

But all this was years ago—three years nearly by the Dulcie almanac—and if Mary Myles sometimes thought she had done foolishly when she sent Charles Hambledon away, there was no one to whom she could own it—not even to her cousin Fanny, who had no thoughts of marrying or giving in marriage, or wishes for happiness beyond the ordering her garden-beds and the welfare of her poor people.

Fanny one day asked her cousin what had become of her old friend the colonel. Mary blushed up brightly, and said she did not know; she believed he was in Hammersley. Fanny, who was cutting out little flannel vests for her school-children, was immediately lost in the intricacies of a gore, and did not notice the blush or the

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bright amused glance in the quiet grey eyes that were watching her at her benevolent toil. Snip, snip, sni-i-i-i-i-ip went the scissors with that triumphant screeching sound which all good housewives love to hear. Mary was leaning back in her chair, perfectly lazy and unoccupied, with her little white hands crossed upon her knees, and her pretty head resting against the chair. She would not have been sorry to have talked a little more upon a subject that was not uninteresting to her, and she tried to make Fanny speak.

'What do you think of him? Have you heard that he has come?' she asked, a little shyly.

'Oh, I don't know. No, I have not seen any of them for a long time,' said Fanny, absently. 'Mary, are you not ashamed of being so lazy? Come and hold these strips.'

Mary did as she was bid, and held out grey flannel strips at arms' length, and watching the scissors flashing, the pins twinkling, and the neat little heaps rising all about on the floor and the chairs and the tables. Then Mrs. Myles tried again. 'Mr. Trevithic tells me that Colonel Hambledon is coming down to help him with this workhouse business. You will have to ask them both to dinner, Fanny.'

Fanny did not answer for a minute. She hesitately looked Mary full in the face, and then said very thoughtfully, 'Don't you think unbleached calico will be best to

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line the jackets with? It will keep the children warm, poor little things.' The children's little backs might be warmed by this heap of snips and linings; but Mary suddenly felt as if all the wraps and flannels and calicos were piled upon her head, and choking and oppressing her, while all the while her heart was cold and shivering, poor thing! There are no flannel-jackets that I know of to warm sad hearts such as hers.

Fanny Garnier was folding up the last of her jackets; Mary, after getting through more work in half-an-hour than Fanny the methodical could manage in two, had returned to her big arm-chair, and was leaning back in the old listless attitude, dreaming dreams of her own, as her eyes wandered to the window and followed the line of the trees showing against the sky—when the door opened, and a stupid country man-servant suddenly introduced Jack, and the Colonel of Mrs. Myles' visionary recollections in actual person, walking into the very midst of the snippings and parings which were scattered about on the floor. Fanny was in nowise disconcerted. She rather gloried in her occupation. I cannot say so much for Mary, who nervously hated any show or affectation of philanthropy, and who now jumped up hastily, with an exclamation, an outstretched hand, and a blush.

'There seems to be something going on,' the Colonel said, standing over a heap of straggling 'backs' and 'arms.'

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'Do come upstairs out of this labyrinth of good intentions,' cried Mary, hastily. 'Fanny, please put down your scissors, and let us go up.'

'I'll follow,' said Fanny, placidly, and Mary had to lead the way alone to the long low bow-window drawing-room which Trevithic knew so well. She had regained her composure and spirits by the time they reached the landing at the top of the low flight of oak steps; and, indeed, both Hambledon and Mrs. Myles were far too much used to the world and its ways to betray to each other the smallest indication of the real state of their minds. Three years had passed since they parted. If Mary's courage had failed then, it was the Colonel's now that was wanting; and so it happens with people late in life—the fatal gift of experience is theirs. They mistrust, they hesitate, they bargain to the uttermost farthing; the jewel is there, but it is locked up so securely in strong boxes and wrappers, that it is beyond the power of the possessors to reach it. Their youth and simplicity is as much a part of them still as their placid middle age; but it is hidden away under the years which are heaped upon the past, and its glory is not shining as of old upon their brows. Mrs. Myles and the Colonel each were acting a part, and perfectly at ease as they discussed all manner of things that had been since they met, and might be before they met again. Fanny, having folded away the last of her flannels, came up placid and smiling too; and after half-an-hour

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the two gentlemen went away. Fanny forgot to ask them to dinner, and wondered why her cousin was so cross all the rest of the afternoon.

No, Mary would not go out. No, she had no headache, thank you. As soon as she had got rid of Fanny and her questionings, Mary Myles ran up to her room and pulled out some old, old papers and diaries, and read the old tear-stained records till new tears fell to wash away the old ones. Ah, yes, she had done rightly when she sent Hambledon away. Three years ago—it had seemed to her then that a lifetime of expiation would not be too long to repent of the wrong she had done when she married—loveless, thrift-ful, longing (and that, poor soul, had been her one excuse,) for the possible love that had never come to her. Life is so long, the time is so slow that passes wearily; she had been married three years, she had worn sackcloth three years: and now,—now if it were not too late, how gladly, how gratefully, she would grasp a hope of some life more complete than the sad one she had led ever since she could remember almost. Would it not be a sign that she had been forgiven if the happiness she had so longed for came to her at last? Mary wondered that her troubles had left no deeper lines upon her face; wondered that she looked so young still, so fair and smiling, while her heart felt so old; and smiled sadly at her own face in the glass.

And then, as people do to whom a faint dawn of rising

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hope shows the darkness in which they have been living, Mrs. Myles began to think of some of her duties that she had neglected of late, and of others still in darkness for whom no dawn was nigh; and all the while, still feeling as people feel whose hearts are full, she was longing for someone to speak to, someone wiser than herself to whom she could say, What is an expiation? can it, does it exist? is it the same as repentance? are we called upon to crush our hearts, to put away our natural emotions? Fanny would say Yes, and would scorn her for her weakness, and cry out with horror at a second marriage. 'And so would I have done,' poor Mary thought, 'if—if poor Tom had only been fond of me.' And then the thought of Trevithic came to her as a person to speak to, a helper and adviser. He would speak the truth; he would not be afraid, Mary thought; and the secret remembrance that he was Hambledon's friend did not make her feel less confidence in his decisions.

Mrs. Myles had been away some little time from her house at Sandsea, and from the self-imposed duties which were waiting undone until her return. Before Fanny came home that evening, she sat down and wrote to her old friend, Miss Triquett, begging her to be so good as to go to Mrs. Gummers, and one or two more whose names, ages, troubles, and families were down upon her list, and distribute a small sum of money enclosed. 'I am not afraid of troubling you, dear Miss Triquett,' wrote Mary

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Myles, in her big, picturesque handwriting. 'I know your kind heart, and that you never grudge time nor fatigue when you can help anyone out of the smallest trouble or the greatest. I have been seeing a good deal lately of Mr. Trevithic, who is of your way of thinking, and who has been giving himself an infinity of pains about some abuses in the workhouse here. He is, I do believe, one of the few people who could have come to the help of the poor creatures. He has so much courage and temper, such a bright and generous way of sympathising and entering into other people's troubles, that I do not despair of his accomplishing this good work. My cousin and I feel very much with and for him. He looked ill and worn one day when I called upon him; but I am glad to think that coming to us has been some little change and comfort to him. He is quite alone, and we want him to look upon this place as his home while he is here. Your old acquaintance, Colonel Hambledon, has come down about this business. It is most horrifying. Can you imagine the poor sick people left with tipsy nurses, and more dreadful still, girls locked up in cellars by the cruel matron for days at a time? but this fact has only just been made public.

'Goodness and enthusiasm like Mr. Trevithic's seem all the more beautiful when one hears such terrible histories of wickedness and neglect: one needs an example like his in this life to raise one from the unprofitable and miserable concerns of every day, and to teach one to believe in

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nobler efforts than one's own selfish and aimless wanderings could ever lead to unassisted.

'Pray remember me very kindly to Miss Moineaux and to Mrs. Trevithic, and believe me, dear Miss Triquett,

'Very sincerely yours,

'MARY MYLES.'

'Is Mrs. Trevithic again suffering from neuralgia? Why is not she able to be with her husband?'

'Why, indeed?' said Miss Moineaux, hearing this last sentence read out by Miss Triquett. This excellent spinster gave no answer. She read this letter twice through deliberately; then she tied her bonnet securely on and trotted off to Gummers and Co. Then, having dispensed the bounties and accepted the thanks of the poor creatures, she determined to run the chance of finding Mrs. Trevithic at home. 'It is my painful dooty,' said Triquett to herself, shaking her head—'my painful dooty. Anne Trevithic should go to her husband; and I will tell her so. If I were Mr. Trevithic's wife, should I leave him to toil alone? No, I should not. Should I permit him to seek sympathy and consolation with another, more fascinating, perhaps? No, certainly not. And deeply grateful should I have felt to her who warned me on my fatal career; and surely my young friend Anne will be grateful to her old friend whose finger arrests her on the very edge of the dark precipice.' Miss Triquett's reflec-

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tions had risen to eloquence by the time she reached the rectory door. A vision of Anne clinging to her in tears, imploring her advice, of John shaking her warmly by the hand and murmuring that to Miss Triquett they owed the renewed happiness of their home, beguiled the way. 'Where is Mrs. Trevithic?' she asked the butler, in her deepest voice. Leave us,' said Miss Triquett to the bewildered menial, as he opened the drawing-room door and she marched into the room; and then encountering Mrs. Trevithic, she suddenly clasped her in her well-meaning old arms.

'I have that to say to you,' said Miss Triquett, in answer to Anne's amazed exclamation, 'which I fear will give you pain; but were I in your place, I should wish to hear the truth.' The good old soul was in earnest; her voice trembled, and her little black curls shook with agitation.

'Pray do not hesitate to mention anything,' said Mrs. Trevithic, surprised but calm, and sitting down and preparing to listen attentively. 'I am sure anything you would like to have attended to——'

Miss Triquett, at the invocation, pulled out the letter from her pocket. 'Remember, only remember this,' she said, 'this comes from a young and attractive woman.' And then in a clear and ringing voice she read out poor Mary's letter, with occasional unspeakable and penetrating looks at Anne's calm features.

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Poor little letter! It had been written in the sincerity and innocence of Mary's heart. Anyone more deeply read in such things might have wondered why Colonel Hambledon's name should have been brought into it; but as it was, it caused one poor jealous heart to beat with a force, a secret throb of sudden jealousy, that nearly choked Anne for an instant as she listened, and a faint pink tinge came rising up and colouring her face.

'Remember, she is *very* attractive,' Miss Triquett re-echoed, folding up the page. 'Ah! be warned, my dear young friend. Go to him; throw yourself into his arms; say, "Dearest, darling husband, your little wife is by your side once more; *I* will be your comforter!" Do not hesitate.' Poor old Triquett, completely carried away by the excitement of the moment, had started from her seat, and with extended arms had clasped an imaginary figure in the air. It was ludicrous, it was pathetic to see this poor old silly meddlesome creature quivering, as her heart beat and bled for the fate of others. She had no tear or emotions of her own. It was absurd—was it not?—that she should care so deeply for things which could not affect her in the least degree. There was Anne, with her usual self-possession, calmly subduing her irritation. She did not smile; she did not frown; she did not seem to notice this momentary ebullition. To me it seems that, of the two, my sympathy is with Miss Triquett. Let us

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be absurd, by all means, if that is the price which must be paid for something which is well worth its price.

Miss Triquett's eyes were full of tears. 'I am impetuous, Mrs. Trevithic,' she said. 'My aunt has often found fault with me for it. Pray excuse me if I have interfered unwarrantably.'

'Interference between married people rarely does any good, Miss Triquett,' said Anne, standing up with an icy platitude, and unmistakably showing that she considered the visit at an end.

'Good-by,' said poor Miss Triquett, wistfully. 'Remember me most kindly to your papa.'

'Certainly,' said Mrs. Trevithic. 'I am afraid you will have a disagreeable walk back in the rain, Miss Triquett. Good-evening. Pray give my compliments to Miss Moineaux.'

The old maid trudged off alone into the mud and the rain, with a mortified sense of having behaved absurdly, disappointed and tired, and vaguely ashamed and crest-fallen. The sound of the dinner-bell ringing at the rectory as she trudged down the hill in the dark and dirt, did not add to her cheerfulness.

Anne, with flushed red cheeks and trembling hands, as Triquett left the room, sank down into her chair for a moment, and then suddenly starting up, busied herself exactly as usual with her daily task of putting the drawing-room in order before she went up to dress. Miss

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Triquett's seat she pushed right away out of sight. She collected her father's writing materials and newspapers, and put them straight. She then re-read her husband's last few lines. There was nothing to be gleaned from them. She replenished the flower-stands, and suddenly remembering that it was Mrs. Myles who had given them to her, she seized one tall glass fabric and all but flung it angrily on the ground. But reflecting that if it were broken it would spoil the pair, she put it back again into its corner, and contented herself with stuffing in all the ugliest scraps of twigs, dead leaves and flowers from the refuse of her basket.

The rector and his daughter dined at five; it was a whim of the old man's. Anne clutched Dulcie in her arms before she went down after dressing. The child had never seen her mamma so excited, and never remembered being kissed like that before by her. 'D'oo lub me vely mush to-day, mamma?' said Dulcie, pathetically. 'Is it toz I 'ave my new fock?'

Old Mr. Bellingham came in at the sound of the second bell, smiling as usual, and rubbing his comfortable little fat hands together; he did not remark that anything was amiss with his daughter, though he observed that there was not enough cayenne in the gravy of the veal cutlets, and that the cook had forgotten the necessary teaspoonful of sugar in the soup. For the first time since he could remember, Anne failed to sympathise with his

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natural vexation, and seemed scarcely as annoyed as usual at the neglect which had been shown. Mr. Bellingham was vexed with her for her indifference: he always left the scolding to her; he liked everything to go smooth and comfortable, and he did not like to be called upon personally to lose his temper. 'For what we have received' —and the butler retires with the crumbs and the cloths, and the little old gentleman—who has had a fire lighted, for the evenings are getting chilly—draws comfortably in to his chimney-corner; while Anne, getting up from her place at the head of the table, says abruptly that she must go upstairs and see what Dulcie is about. A restless mood had come over her; something unlike anything she had ever felt before. Little Triquett's eloquence, which had not even seemed to disturb Anne at the time, had had full time to sink into this somewhat torpid apprehension, and excite Mrs. Trevithic's indignation. It was not the less fierce because it had smouldered so long.

'Insolent creature!' Anne said to herself, working herself up into a passion; 'how dare she interfere? Insolent ridiculous creature! "Remember that that woman is attractive"—— How dare she speak so to me? Oh, they are all in league—in league against me!' cried poor Anne, with a moan, wringing her hands with all the twinkle of stones upon her slim white fingers. 'John does not love me, he never loved me! He will not do as I wish, though he promised and swore at the altar he would.

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And *she*—she is spreading her wicked toils round him, and keeping him there, while I am here alone—all alone; and he leaves me exposed to the insolence of those horrible old maids. Papa eats his dinner and only thinks of the flavour of the dishes, and Dulcie chatters to her doll and don't care—and no one comes when I ring,' sobbed Mrs. Trevithic in a burst of tears, violently tugging at the bell-rope. 'Oh, it is a shame, a shame!'

Only as she wiped away the tears a gleam of determination came into Mrs. Trevithic's blue eyes, and the flush on her pale cheeks deepened. She had taken a resolution. This is what she would do—this was her resolution: she would go and confront him there on the spot and remind him of his duty—he who was preaching to others. It was her right; and then—and then she would leave him for ever, and never return to Sandsea to be scoffed at and jeered at by those horrible women, said Anne vaguely to herself as the door opened and the maid appeared. 'Bring me a *Bradshaw*, Judson,' said Mrs. Trevithic, very much in her usual tone of voice, and with a great effort recovering her equanimity. The storm had passed over, stirring the waters of this overgrown pool, breaking away the weeds which were growing so thickly on the stagnant surface, and rippling the slow shallows underneath. It seems a contradiction to write of this dull unimpressionable woman now and then waking and experiencing some vague emotion and realisation of experiences which had

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been slowly gathering, and apparently unnoticed, for a long time before: but who does not count more than one contradiction among their experiences? It was not Anne's fault that she could not understand, feel quickly and keenly, respond to the calls which stronger and more generous natures might make upon her; her tears flowed dull and slow long after the cause, unlike the quick bright drops that would spring to Mary Myles' clear eyes —Mary whom the other woman hated with a natural, stupid, persistent hatred that nothing ever could change.

Judson, the maid, who was not deeply read in human nature, and who respected her mistress immensely as a model of decision, precision, deliberate determination, was intensely amazed to hear that she was to pack up that night, and that Mrs. Trevithic would go to London that evening by the nine-o'clock train.

'Send for a fly directly, Judson, and dress Miss Dulcie.'

'Dress Miss Dulcie?' Judson asked, bewildered.

'Yes, Miss Dulcie will come too,' said Anne, in a way that left no remonstrance.

She did not own it to herself; but by a strange and wayward turn of human nature, this woman—who was going to reproach her husband, to leave him for ever, to cast herself adrift from him—took Dulcie with her; Dulcie, a secret defence, a bond and strong link between them, that she knew no storm or tempest would ever break.

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Mr. Bellingham was too much astounded to make a single objection. He thought his daughter had taken leave of her senses when she came in and said good-by.

Poor thing, she, too, felt at moments as if her senses were deserting her, the storm raging in her heart was a fierce one. Gusts of passion and jealousy were straining and beating and tearing; 'sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost.' Poor Anne, whose emotions were all the more ungovernable when they occasionally broke from the habitual restraint in which she held them, sat in her corner of the carriage, torturing herself, and picturing to herself Trevithic enslaved, enchanted. If she could have seen the poor fellow adding up long lists of figures in his dreary little office, by the light of a smoky lamp, I think her jealousy might have been appeased.

All the way to town Anne sat silent in her corner; but if she deserved punishment, poor thing, she inflicted it then upon herself, and with an art and an unrelenting determination for which no other executioner would have found the courage.

They reached the station at last, with its lights and transient life and bustle. A porter called a cab. Dulcie, and the maid, and Mrs. Trevithic got in. They were to sleep at the house of an old lady, a sister of Mr. Bellingham's, who was away, as Anne knew, but whose housekeeper would admit them.

And then the journey began once more across dark cuts,

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winding thoroughfares, interminable in their lights and darknesses, across dark places that may have been squares. The darkness changed and lengthened the endless road: they had left Oxford Street, with its blazing shops; they had crossed the Park's blackness; the roll of the wheels was like the tune of some dismal night-march. The maid sat with Dulcie asleep in her arms, but presently Dulcie woke up with a shrill piteous outcry. 'I'se so ti'ed,' she sobbed in the darkness, the coldness, the dull drip of the rain, the monotonous sound of the horse's feet striking on the mud. 'I wan' my tea; I'se so ti'ed, wan' my little bed'—this was her piteous litany.

Anne was very gentle and decided with her, only once she burst out, 'Oh, don't, don't, I cannot bear it, Dulcie.'

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CHAPTER IX.

HASTY PUDDING AND BLOWS FROM A CLUB.

Our lives often seem to answer strangely to our wishes. Is there some hidden power by which our spirits work upon the substance of which our fate is built? Jack wished to fight. Assault him now, dire spirit of ill-will, of despondency, and that most cruel spirit of all called calumny. This tribe of giants are like the bottle-monsters of the Arabian Nights, intangible, fierce, sly, remorseless, springing up suddenly, mighty shadows coming in the night and striking their deadly blows. They raise their clubs (and these clubs are not trees torn from the forest, but are made from the forms of human beings massed together), and the clubs fall upon the victim and he is crushed.

There was a brandy-and-water weekly meeting at Hammersley, called 'Ours,' every Thursday evening, to which many of the tradespeople were in the habit of resorting and there discussing the politics of the place. Mr. Bulcox had long been a member, so was Pitchley the grocer, and Oker himself did not disdain to join the party; and as John was not there to contradict them, you may

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be sure these people told their own story. How it spread I cannot tell, but it is easy to imagine: one rumour after another to the hurt and disadvantage of poor Trevithic began to get about. Reformers are necessarily unpopular among a certain class. The blind and the maimed and the halt worshipped the ground Trevithic stood upon at first. 'He was a man as would see to their rights,' they said; 'and if he had his way, would let them have their snuff and a drop of something comfortable. He had his cranks. These open windows gave 'em the rheumatics, and this sloppin' and washin' was all along of it, and for all the talk there were some things but what they wouldn't deny was more snug in Bulcox's time than now; but he were a good creature for all that, Mr. Trevithic, and meant well he did,' &c. &c. Only when the snuff and the comfortable drop did not come as they expected, and the horrors of the past dynasty began to be a little forgotten—at the end of a month or so of whitewashing and cleansing and reforming, the old folks began to grumble again much as usual. Trevithic could not take away their years and their aches and pains and wearinesses, and make the workhouse into a bower of roses and the old people into lovely young lasses and gallant lads again.

He had done his best, but he could not work miracles.

It happened that a Lincolnshire doctor writing from Downham to the *Jupiter* not long after, eloquently

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describing the symptoms, the treatment, the means of prevention for this new sort of cholera, spoke of the devotion of some and the curious indifference of others. 'Will it be believed,' he said, 'that in some places the clergyman has been known to abandon his flock at the first threat of danger—a threat which in one especial case at F., not far from here, was not fulfilled, although the writer can testify from his own experience to the truth of the above statement?'

As far as poor Jack's interests were concerned, it would have been better for him if the cholera had broken out at Featherston; it would have brought him back to his own home. But Penfold recovered, Mrs. Hodge—the only other patient—died, Hodge married again immediately, and that was the end of it. 'Ours' took in the *Jupiter*; somebody remembered that Downham and Featherston were both in the same neighbourhood; some one else applied the story, and Bulcox and the gas-fitter between them concocted a paragraph for the *Anvil*, the great Hammersley organ; and so ill will and rumour did their work, while Jack went his rounds in the wards of St. Magdalene's, looking sadder than the first day he had come, although the place was cleaner, the food warmer and better, the sick people better tended than ever before; for the guardians had been persuaded to let in certain deaconesses of the town—good women, who nursed for love and did not steal the tea. But in the

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meantime this odd cabal which had set in had risen and grown, and from every side Jack began to meet with cold looks and rebuffs. He had ill-used his wife, deserted her, they said; abandoned his parish from fear of infection. He had forged, he had been expelled from his living. There was nothing that poor Jack was not accused of by one person or another. One day when his friend Austin came in with the last number of the *Anvil*, and showed him a very spiteful paragraph about himself, Jack only shrugged his shoulders. 'We understand that the gentleman whose extraordinary revelations respecting the management of our workhouse have been met by some with more credence than might have been expected, considering the short time which had passed since he first came among us, is the rector alluded to in a recent letter to the *Jupiter* from a medical man, who deserted his parish at the first alarm of cholera.' 'Can this be true?' said Austin, gravely.

'Mrs. Hodge certainly died of the cholera,' Jack answered, 'and Penfold was taken ill and recovered. Those are the only two cases in my parish.'

'I am afraid that Skipper did not behave very well; in fact, I had to write to him to go back.'

A little later in the day, as the two young men were walking along the street, they met Mr. Oker puffing along the pavement. He stopped as usual to rub his hands when he saw Trevithic.

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'As your attention been called, sir,' he said, 'to a paragraft in the *Hanvil*, that your friends should contradict, if possible, sir? It's mos' distressin' when such things gets into the papers. They say at the club that some of the guardians is about to ask for an account of the sick-fund money, sir, which, I believe, Mr. Skipper put into your 'ands, sir. For the present this paragraft should be contradicted, if possible, sir.'

Oker was an odious creature, insolent and civil; and as he spoke he gave a sly, spiteful glance into Jack's face. Trevithic was perfectly unmoved, and burst out laughing. 'My good Mr. Oker,' he said, 'you will be sorry to hear that there is no foundation whatever in the paragraph. It is some silly tittle-tattling tale, which does not affect me in the least. If anyone is to blame, it is Mr. Skipper, the workhouse chaplain, who was at Featherston in my place. You can tell your friends at the club that they have hit the wrong man. Good-day.' And the young fellow marched on his way with Mr. Austin, leaving Oker to recover as best he could.

'I'm afraid they will give you trouble yet,' Austin said; 'King Stork though you are.'

When Jack appeared before the board on the next Wednesday, after the vote had been passed for dismissing the Bulcoxes, it seemed to him that one-half of the room greeted his entrance with a scowl of ill will and disgust, the other half with alarm and suspicion. No wonder.

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It was Jack's belief that some of the guardians were seriously implicated in the charges which had been brought against Bulcox; others were certainly so far concerned that the *Jupiter* had accused them of unaccountable neglect; and nobody likes to be shown up in a leader even for merely neglecting his duties.

All this while the workhouse had been in a commotion; the master and mistress were only temporarily fulfilling their duties until a new couple should have been appointed. The board, chiefly at the instance of Oker the gas-fitter, and Pitchley the retail grocer, did not press the charges brought against Mr. Bulcox; but they contented themselves with dismissing him and his wife. It was not over-pleasant for Trevithic to meet them about the place, as he could not help doing occasionally; but there was no help for it, and he bore the disagreeables of the place as best he could, until Mr. and Mrs. Evans, the newly appointed master and matron, made their appearance. The board was very civil, but it was anything but cordial to Trevithic. Jack, among other things, suspected that Pitchley himself supplied the bad tea and groceries which had been so much complained of, and had exchanged various bottles of port from the infirmary for others of a better quality, which were served at the master's own table. So the paupers told him.

Meanwhile the opposition had not been idle. It was

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Bulcox himself, I think, who had discovered that Jack, in administering the very limited funds at his disposal, had greatly neglected the precaution of tickets. One or two ill-conditioned people, whom Trevithic had refused to assist, had applied to the late master, and assured him that Trevithic was not properly dispensing the money at his command. One tipsy old woman in particular was very indignant; and, judging by her own experience, did not hesitate to accuse the chaplain of keeping what was not his own.

This credible witness in rags and battered wires stood before the chairman when Jack came in. It seems impossible that anybody should have seriously listened to a complaint so absurd and unlikely. But it must be remembered that many of the people present were already ill disposed, that some of them were weak, and others stupid, and they would not have been sorry to get out of their scrape by discovering Jack to be of their own flesh and blood.

Trevithic heard them without a word, mechanically buttoning up his coat, as he had a trick of doing, and then in a sudden indignation he tore it open, and from his breast-pocket drew the small book in which he had made all his notes. 'Here,' said he, 'are my accounts. They were made *hastily* at the time, but they are accurate, and you will see that I have paid every farthing away that was handed over to me by Mr. Skipper, and about twice the

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amount besides, out of my own pocket. You can send for the people to whom I have paid the money, if you like.' The little book went travelling about from one hand to another, while the remorseless Trevithic continued, 'I now in my turn demand that the ledgers of these gentlemen'—blazing round upon the retail grocer and Oker the gas-fitter, 'be produced here immediately upon the spot, without any previous inspection, and that I, too, may have the satisfaction of clearing up my doubts as to their conduct.' 'That is fair enough,' said one or two of the people present. 'It's quite impossible, unheard of,' said some of the others; but the majority of the guardians present were honest men, who were roused at last, and the ledgers were actually sent for.

I have no time here to explain the long course of fraud which these books disclosed. The grocer was found to have been supplying the house at an enormous percentage, with quantities differing in his book and in that of the master, who must again have levied a profit. The gas-fitter, too, turned out to be the contractor from a branch establishment, and to have also helped himself. This giant of peculation certainly fell dead upon the floor when he laid open his accounts before the board, for Hammersley workhouse is now one of the best managed in the whole kingdom.

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CHAPTER X.

JACK HELPS TO DISENCHANT THE BEAUTIFUL LADY.

ANNY GARNIER bustled home one afternoon, brimming over, good soul, with rheumatisms, chicken-poxes, and other horrors that were not horrors to her, or interjections, or lamentations; but new reasons for exertions which were almost beyond her strength at times—as now, when she said wearily, 'that she must go back to her ward; some one was waiting for things that she had promised.' She was tired, and Mary, half ashamed, could not help offering to go in her cousin's place. It seemed foolish to refrain from what she would have done yesterday in all simplicity, because there was a chance that Hambledon was there to-day, or Trevithic, who was Hambledon's friend, if not quite Hambledon himself, who talked to him and knew his mind, and could repeat his talk.

When Mary reached the infirm ward, where she was taking her jellies, and bird's-eye, and liquorice, her heart gave a little flutter, for she saw that two figures were standing by one of the beds. One was Jack, who turned

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round to greet her as she came up with her basket on her arm. The other was Hambledon, who looked at her and then turned away. As for all the old women in their starched nightcaps, it was a moment of all-absorbing excitement to them,—sitting bolt upright on their beds, and bowing affably, as was the fashion in the infirm ward. It was quite worth while to be civil to the gentry, let alone manners; you never knew but what they might have a quarter-of-a-pound of tea, or a screw of snuff in their pockets. 'Law bless you, it was not such as them as denies themselves anythink they may fancy.' Such was the Hammersley creed.

As she came up, Mary made an effort, and in her most self-possessed and woman-of-the-worldest manner, put out her hand again and laughed, and exclaimed at this meeting. Her shyness, and the very effort she made to conceal it, gave her an artificial manner that chilled and repelled poor Hambledon as no shyness or hesitation would have done. 'She's no heart,' said the poor Colonel to himself. 'She don't remember. She would only laugh at me.' He forgot that Mary was not a child, not even a very young woman; that this armour of expediency had grown up naturally with years and with the strain of a solitary life. It is a sort of defence to which the poor little hedgehogs of women, such as Mary Myles, resort sometimes. It meant very little, but it frightened the Colonel away. Mrs. Myles heard him go as she bent over poor old Mrs.

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Crosspoint, and her heart gave a little ache, which was not entirely of sympathy for the poor old thing's troubles.

However, Mary had a little talk with Trevithic in the dark as she crossed the courts and passages, and he walked beside her, which did her good, though she said nothing that anyone who did not know would have construed into more than it seemed to mean.

She told him a little about her past life. She did not tell him that Colonel Hambledon had once asked her to come into his life; but Trevithic knew all that she wanted to say as he listened to the voice speaking in the dark,—the sweet low voice with the music in it,—a revelation came to him there in the archway of that narrow workhouse stone passage.

A revelation came to him, and that instant, as was his way, he acted upon it. 'I think some people—' he began, and then he stopped. 'I think you should secure a friend,' he said quickly, in an odd voice. 'You should marry,' and he faltered, as he made way for two poor women who limped past on their way to their corners in the great pigeon-holes case of human suffering. That little shake in his voice frightened Trevithic. What was it to him? How did Mary Myles' fate concern him? He let her out at the great gate. He did not offer to walk back with her. The great iron bars closed with a clang, as she went away out into the dim world that was surging round about these prison walls. He would go back to

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Anne, Trevithic said to himself; even while the last grateful words were uttering in his ears, and the sweet quick eyes still lighting up for him the dulness of the stony place. Mary Myles went back alone; and all that night Jack lay awake thinking, turning some things in his mind and avoiding others, wondering what he should say to Hambledon, what he should leave unsaid; for some nameless power had taught him to understand now, as he never had understood before, what was passing in other minds and hearts. A power too mighty for my poor Jack to encounter or hope to overcome in fight, a giant from whom the bravest can only turn away—so gentle is he, so beautiful, so humble in his irresistible might, that though many might conquer him if they would, they will not, and that is the battle.

And I think this giant must have been that nameless one we read of in the story whom Jack did not care to fight, but he locked him up and barred him in the castle, and bolted gates and kept him safe behind them: the giant who in return for this strange treatment gave Jack the sword of sharpness and the cap of knowledge. The sword pricked fiercely enough, the cap of knowledge weighed, ah, too heavily, but Jack, as we know, did not shrink from pain.

The imprisoned giant touched some kindly chord in Jack's kind heart. Was he not Hambledon's friend? was he not a link between two people, very near and yet very

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far apart? Had Mary Myles' kindness been quite disinterested? he asked himself, a little bitterly, before he spoke;—spoke a few words which made Charles Hambledon flush up and begin to tug at his moustache, and which decided Mary Myles' fate as much as Anne Bellingham's tears had decided Jack's three years ago.

'Why don't you try again?' Trevithic said. 'I think there might be a chance for you.'

The Colonel did not answer, but went on pulling at his moustache. Trevithic was silent, too, and sighed. 'I never saw anyone like her,' he said at last. 'I think she carries a blessing wherever she goes. I, who am an old married man, may say so much, mayn't I? I have seen some men go on their knees for gratitude for what others are scarcely willing to put out their hands to take.'

Poor Jack! The cap of knowledge was heavy on his brow as he spoke. He did not look to see the effect of his words. What would he not have said to serve her? He walked away to the desk where he kept his notes and account-books, and took pen and paper, and began to write.

'It is a lucky thing for me that you are a married man,' the Colonel said, with an uneasy laugh. 'It's one's fate. They won't like the connection at home. She don't care about it one way or another, for all you say; and yet I find myself here again and again. I have a great mind to go this very evening.'

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'I am writing to her now,' Trevithic answered, rather incoherently, after a minute. 'The ladies have promised to come with me to-morrow to see the rectory-house at St. Bigots. I shall call for them about twelve o'clock; and it will take us a quarter of an hour to walk there.'

It was a bright autumn morning, glittering and brilliant. Jack stood waiting for Mrs. Myles and her cousin in the little wood at the foot of the garden slope, just behind the lodge. A bird, with outstretched wings, fluttered from the ivy bed at his feet, and went and perched upon the branch of a tree. All the noises of life came to him from the town, glistening between the gleam of the trees: the fall of the hammer from the woodyard where the men were at work, and the call of the church-bell to prayer, and the distant crow of the farmyard upon the far-off hill, and the whistle of the engine, starting and speeding through the quiet country valley to the junction in the town, where the great world's gangways met and diverged.

All this daily life was going on, and John Trevithic struck with his stick at a dead branch of a tree. Why was work, so simple and straightforward a business to some honest folks, so tangled and troubled and unsatisfactory to others? In daily life hand labour is simple enough. Old Peascud, down below in the kitchen-garden, turns over mother earth, throbbing with life and all its mysteries, with what he calls a 'purty shovel,' and pats it down, and complacently thinks it is his own doing that the

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ivy slips cut off the branch which he has stuck into the ground are growing and striking out fresh roots.

Peascud is only a sort of shovel himself, destined to keep this one small acre out of the square acres which cover the surface of the earth, in tolerable order, and he does it with a certain amount of spurring and pushing, and when his day's work is over hangs up comfortably on a nail and rests with an easy mind; but Jack, who feels himself a shovel too, has no laws to guide him. Some of the grain he has sown has come up above the ground, it is true, but it is unsatisfactory after all; he does not know whether or not his slips are taking root—one or two of them he has pulled up, like the children do, to see whether they are growing.

As Jack stands moralising, crow cocks, ring bells, strike hammers. It was a fitting chorus, distant and cheerful, and suggestive to the sweet and brilliant life of the lady for whom he waits. Not silence, but the pleasant echoes of life should accompany her steps, the cheerful strains of summer, and the bright colours of spring. Trevethic saw everything brightened and lighted up by her presence, and thought that it was so in fact, poor fellow. Sometimes in a foul ward, when the dull sights and sounds oppressed him almost beyond bearing, with a sudden breath of relief and happiness the image of this charming and beautiful woman would pass before him, sweet and pure, and lovely and unsoiled amidst lovely

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things, far away from these ghastly precincts. What had such as she to do with such as these? Heaven forbid that so fair a bird, with its tender song and glancing white plumage, should come to be choked and soiled and caged in the foul dungeons to which he felt called. John Trevithic, like many others, exaggerated, I think, to himself the beauty and the ugliness of the things he looked upon as they appeared to others, not that things are not ten thousand times more beautiful and more hideous too, perhaps, than we have eyes to see or hearts to realise, but they are not so as far as the eyes with which others see them are concerned. To this sweet and beautiful and graceful woman the world was not so fair a place as to this careworn man with his haggard eyes and sad knowledge of life. He thought Mrs. Myles so far above him and beyond him in all things, that he imagined that the pains of others must pain her and strike her soft heart more cruelly even than himself, that the loveliness of life was more necessary to her a thousand times than it could be to him.

Meanwhile all the little dried pine-twigs were rustling and rippling, for she was coming down the little steep path, holding up her muslin skirts as she came, and stepping with her rapid slender footsteps, stooping and then looking up to smile. Mrs. Myles was always well dressed —there was a certain completeness and perfection of dainty smoothness and freshness about all her ways which be-

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longed to her dress and her life and her very loves and dislikes. The soft flutter of her ribbons belongs to her as completely as the pointed ends of old Peascud's Sunday shirt-collars and the broad stiff tapes of his best waistcoat do to him, or as John Trevithic's fancies as he stands in the fir-wood. Another minute and she is there beside him, holding out her hand and smiling with her sweet still eyes, and the bird flutters away from its branch. 'Fanny cannot come,' she said. 'We must go without her, Mr. Trevithic.'

A something—I cannot tell you what—told Jack as she spoke that this was the last walk they would ever take together. It was one of those feelings we all know and all believe in at the bottom of our hearts. This something coming I know not from whence, going I know not where, suddenly began to speak in the silent and empty chambers of poor Trevithic's heart, echoing mournfully, but with a warning in its echoes that he had never understood before. This something seemed to say, No, No, No. It was like a bell tolling as they walked along the road. Jack led the way, and they turned off the high-road across a waste, through sudden streets springing up around them, across a bridge over a branch of the railway, into a broad black thoroughfare, which opened into the quiet street leading into Bolton Fields. The fields had long since turned to stones and iron railings enclosing a churchyard, in the midst of which a church had been built. The houses all

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round the square were quaint red brick dwellings, with here and there a carved lintel to a doorway, and old stone steps whitened and scrubbed by three or four generations of patient housemaids. The trees were bare behind the iron railing; there was silence, though the streets beyond Bolton Fields were busy like London streets. Trevithic stopped at the door of one of the largest of these dwellings. It had straight windows like the others, and broken stone steps upon which the sun was shining, and tall iron railings casting slant shadows on the pavement. It looked quaint and narrow, with its high rooms and blackened bricks, but it stood in sunshine. A child was peeping from one of the many-paned windows, and some birds were fluttering under the deep eaves of the roof.

Jack led the way into the dark-panelled entrance, and opened doors and windows, and ran upstairs. Mrs. Myles flitted here and there, suggested, approved of the quaint old house, with the sunny landings for Dulcie to play on, and the convenient cupboards for her elders, and quaint recesses, and the pleasant hints of an old world, more prosy and deliberate and less prosaic than to-day. There was a pretty little niche on the stairs, where Jack fancied Dulcie perching, and a window looking into the garden down below; there was a little wooden dining-room, and a study with faded wire book-cases let into the walls. It was all in good order, for Trevithic had had it cleaned

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and scrubbed. The house was more cheerful than the garden at the back, where stone and weeds seemed to be flourishing unmolested.

'It is almost time to go,' Mrs. Myles said at last, seeing Trevithic looking at his watch.

'Not yet,—you have not half seen the garden,' answered Trevithic hastily. 'Come this way.' And Mary followed, wrapping her velvet cloak more closely round her slender shoulders.

They were standing in the little deserted garden of the house, for the garden was all damp, as gardens are which are rarely visited. The back of the house, less cheerful than the front, was close shuttered, except for the windows Trevithic had opened. Some dreary aloe trees were sprouting their melancholy spikes, a clump of fir-trees and laurel-bushes was shuddering in one corner; a long grass-grown lawn, with rank weeds and shabby flower-beds, reached from the black windows to the stony paths, in which, in some unaccountable manner, as is usual in deserted places, the sand and gravel had grown into stones and lumps of earth and clay. Jack was strangely silent and distracted, and paced round and round the place in an unmeaning way.

'This is very dreary,' said Mrs. Myles, pulling her cloak still closer round her. 'I like the house, but no one could be happy walking in this garden.'

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Trevithic smiled a little sadly. 'I don't know,' he said. 'I don't think happiness depends upon locality.'

Poor fellow, his outward circumstances were so prosperous, his inner life so sad and untoward. No wonder that he undervalued external matters, and counted all lost that was not from within.

Mary Myles blushed, as she had a way of blushing when she was moved, and her voice failed into a low measured music of its own. 'I envy you,' she said. 'You do not care like me for small things, and are above the influences of comfort and discomfort, of mere personal gratifications. It has been the curse of my life that I have never risen above anything, but have fallen shamefully before such easy temptations that I am ashamed even to recall them. I wonder what it is like,' she said, with her bright, half-laughing, half-admiring smile, 'to be, as you are, above small distractions, and able to fight real and great battles—and win them too?' she added, kindly and heartily.

A very faint mist came before Trevithic's eyes as Mary spoke, unconsciously encouraging him, unknowingly cheering him with words and appreciation—how precious she did not know, nor did he dare to tell himself.

'I am afraid what you describe is a sensation very few people know,' said Trevithic. 'We are all, I suspect, try-

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ing to make the best of our defeats; triumphant, if we are not utterly routed.'

'And have you been routed at Featherston?' Mrs. Myles asked.

'Completely,' said Trevithic. 'Anne will retreat with flying colours, but I am ignobly defeated, and only too thankful to run away and come and live here—in this very house perhaps—if she will consent to it.'

'Anne is a happy woman to have anyone to want her,' said Mrs. Myles, coming back to her own thoughts with a sigh; 'people love me, but nobody wants me.'

'Here is a friend of yours, I think,' said Jack, very quickly, in an odd sort of voice; for as he spoke he saw Hambledon coming in from the passage-door. Mrs. Myles saw him too, and guessed in an instant why Trevithic had detained her. Now, in her turn, she tried to hold him back.

'Do you believe in expiations, Mr. Trevithic?' said Mary, still strangely excited and beginning to tremble.

'I believe in a grateful heart, and in love and humility, and in happiness when it comes across our way,' said Jack, with kind sad eyes, looking admiringly at the sweet and appealing face.

Mary was transformed. She had laid aside all her gentle pride and self-contained sadness: she looked as she must have looked long ago, when she was a girl, humble, imploring, confused; and though her looks

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seemed to pray him to remain, Trevithic turned away abruptly, and he went to meet Hambledon, who was coming shyly along the weedy path, a tall and prosperous-looking figure in the sunshine and desolation. 'You are late,' Trevithic said, with a kind, odd smile; 'I had given you up.' And then he left them and went into the house.

As Jack waited, talking to the housekeeper meanwhile, he had no great courage to ask himself many questions; to look behind; to realise very plainly what had happened; to picture to himself what might have been had fate willed it otherwise. He prayed an honest prayer. 'Heaven bless them,' he said in his heart, as he turned his steps away and left them together. He waited now patiently, walking in and out of the bare rooms, where people had once lived and waited too, who were gone with their anxious hearts, and their hopes, and their hopeless loves, and their defeats, to live in other houses and mansions which are built elsewhere. Was it all defeat for him?—not all. Had he not unconsciously wronged poor Anne, and given her just cause for resentment; and was anything too late while hope and life remained? If he could not give to his wife a heart's best love and devotion —if she herself had forbidden this—he could give her friendship, and in time the gentle ties of long use and common interest, and Dulcie's dear little arms might draw them closer together—so Jack thought in this softened mood.

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John had waited a long time pacing up and down the empty rooms with the faded wire bookcases for furniture, and the melancholy pegs and hooks and wooden slabs which people leave behind them in the houses they abandon: nearly an hour had passed and the two there out in the garden were talking still by the laurel-bushes. What was he waiting for? he asked himself presently. Had they not forgotten his very existence? There was work to be done—he had better go. What had he waited for so long? What indeed, poor fellow! He had been longing for a word; one sign. He only wanted to be remembered: with that strange selfish longing which pities the poor familiar self, he longed for some word of kindness and sign of recognition from the two who had forgotten that anywhere besides in all the world there were hearts that loved or longed or forgot. John trudged away patiently as soon as he had suddenly made clear to himself that it was time to go. He knew the road well enough by this time, and cut off side turnings and came into the town—black and faded—even in this brilliant sunshine that was calling the people out of their houses, opening wide windows, drying the rags of clothes, brightening the weary faces. The children clustered round the lamp-posts chattering and playing. One or two people said good-morning to him as he passed, who would have stared sulkily in a fog; the horses in the road seemed to prick their ears, and the fly from the station, instead of

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crawling wearily along, actually passed him at a trot. Jack turned to look after it: a foolish likeness had struck him. It was but for an instant, and he forgot it as he reached the heavy door of the workhouse.

The porter was out, and the old pauper who let Jack in began some story to which he scarcely listened. He was full of the thought of those two there in the garden —happy! ah, how happy in each other's companionship; while he, deserted, lonely, discontented, might scarcely own to himself, without sin, that his home was a desolate one; that his wife was no wife, as he felt it; that life had no such prospects of love, solace, and sympathy for him, as for some of the most forlorn of the creatures under his care. It was an ill frame of mind coming so quickly after a good one—good work done and peace-making, and a good fight won; but the very giant he had conquered with pain and struggle had given him the cap of knowledge, and it pressed and ached upon his brow, and set its mark there. Trevithic put up his hand to his forehead wearily, as he walked along the dull paved courts, and passed through one barred iron door after another. Most of the old folks were sunning themselves upon the benches, and the women were standing gossiping in the galleries of the house. There are stone galleries at Hammersley, from which the clothes are hung. So he came in, opening one last iron gate to his office on the ground-floor, at the farther extremity of the great building. It

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was not very far from the children's wards, and on these fine mornings the little creatures, with their quaint mob-caps and straight bonnets, came scrambling down the flight of steps into the yards. The very young ones would play about a little bo-peep behind an iron grating, or clinging to the skirts of one of the limp figures that were wearily lagging about the place. But the children did not very long keep up their little baby frolics. Sad-faced little paupers in stripe blue dresses would sometimes stand staring at Trevithic—with dark eyes gleaming in such world-weighed little faces, that his kind heart ached for them. His favourite dream for them was a children's holiday. It would almost seem that they had guessed his good intentions towards them to-day; a little stream was setting in in the direction of his office, a small group stood watching not far off. It made way before him and disappeared, and then as he came near he saw that the door was open. A little baby pauper was sitting on the flags and staring in, two other little children had crept up to the very threshold, a third had slipped its fingers into the hinge and was peeping through the chink, and then at the sound of his tired footsteps falling wearily on the pavement, there came a little cry of 'Daddy, daddy!' The sweet little voice he loved best in the whole world seemed to fill the room, and Dulcie, his own little Dulcie, came to the door in the sunlight, and clasped him round the knees.

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Trevithic, with these little arms to hold him safe, felt as if his complaints had been almost impious. In one minute, indeed, he had forgotten them altogether, and life still had something for him to love and to cling to. The nurse explained matters a little to the bewildered chaplain. Nothing had happened that she knew of. Mrs. Trevithic was gone to look for him. She had driven to Mrs. Myles' straight in the fly from the railway. She had left Miss Dulcie and her there to wait. She had left no message. Mrs. Trevithic had seemed put out like, said the nurse, and had made up her mind all of a sudden. They had slept in London at missis's aunt's. Trevithic was utterly bewildered.

In the meantime it was clear that something must be done for Dulcie, who was getting hungry now that her first little rapture was over (for raptures are hungry work). After some little demur, Trevithic told the girl to put on Miss Dulcie's cloak again.

While John is talking to Dulcie in his little office, Anne had driven up to Mrs. Garnier's door, and been directed from thence to the rectory in Bolton Fields. It was thus she first crossed the threshold of her husband's house. 'I want to speak to the lady and gentleman,' she said to the woman who let her in. And the housekeeper pointed to the garden and told her she would find them there. Anne, the stupid commonplace woman, was shivering with passion and emotion as she passed through

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the empty rooms; a few letters were lying on the chimney that John had torn open; the window-shutter was flapping, the wood creaked under her fierce angry footsteps. There, at the end of the path, under a little holly tree, stood Mary Myles, and suddenly Anne, hurrying along in her passion, clutched her arm with an angry fevered hand, and with a fierce flushed face confronted her. 'Where is my husband?' hissed Anne. 'You did not think that I should come. . . . How dare you take him from me?'

Colonel Hambledon, who had only gone away for a step or two, came back, hearing a voice, with Mary's glove, which she had left on the broken seat where they had been sitting. 'What is it?' said he.

'Where is he?' cried the foolish, stupid woman, bursting into tears. 'I knew I should find him here with her. Where is my husband?'

'He has been gone some time, poor fellow,' said the Colonel, with a look of repugnance and dislike that Anne saw and never forgot. 'Mrs. Trevithic, why do you think such bad thoughts?'

While Mary Myles, indignant in her turn, cried, 'Oh, for shame, for shame, Anne Trevithic! You are cold-hearted yourself, and do you dare to be jealous of others? You, who have the best and kindest husband any woman ever had in all the world.' Mary, as she spoke, clung with both hands to Hambledon's arm, trembling too, and almost crying. The Colonel, in his happiness, could

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hardly understand that anyone else should be unhappy on such a day. While he was comforting Mary, and entreating her not to mind what that woman had said, Anne, overpowered with shame, conscience-smitten, fled away down the path and through the house—'deadly pale, like a ghost,' said the housekeeper afterwards—and drove straight to the workhouse, where she had left her child. As she came to the great door, it opened with a dull sound, even before the driver had pulled at the big bell.

Anne, who had got out of the carriage, stood in a bewildered sort of dream, stupidly staring at a little procession that was coming under the archway,—a couple of paupers, the nurse-maid, and, last of all, her husband, carrying little Dulcie in his arms, who were all advancing towards her.

'Oh John! I have been looking for you everywhere,' she said, with a little cry, as with a revulsion of feeling she ran up to him, with outstretched hands. 'Where have you been? Mrs. Myles did not know, and I came back for Dulcie. We shall miss the train. Oh, where am I to go?'

Mrs. Trevithic, nervous, fluttered, bewildered, for perhaps the second time in her life, seemed scarcely to know what she was saying—she held up her cheek to be kissed; she looked about quite scared, and shrank away again. 'It's no use, you will be too angry to forgive me,' she said: 'but about these trains . . .'

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'What do you mean by the trains, Anne?' her husband said. 'Dulcie wants something to eat. Get into the carriage again.'

It is difficult to believe—Trevithic himself could not understand it—Anne obeyed without a word. He asked no questions when she burst out with an incoherent, 'Oh, John, they were so strange and unkind!' and then began to cry and cry and tremble from head to foot.

It was not till they got to the hotel that Mrs. Trevithic regained her usual composure, and ordered some rooms and lunch off the carte for the whole party. Trevithic never asked what had happened, though he guessed well enough, and when Hambledon told him afterwards that Mrs. Trevithic had burst in upon them in the garden, it was no news to poor John.

They had finished their dinner on the ground-floor room of the quiet old inn. Little Dulcie was perched at the window watching the people as they crossed and re-crossed the wire-blind. A distant church clock struck some quarters, the sound came down the street, and Trevithic smiled, saying, 'I think you will be too late for your train, Anne, to-day.' Anne's heart gave a throb as he spoke. She always thought people in earnest, and she looked up wistfully and tried to speak; but the words somehow stuck in her throat. Meanwhile Trevithic looked at his watch, and jumped up in a sudden fluster. It was later than he imagined. He had his afternoon

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service at the workhouse to attend to. It was Friday, and he must go. He had not a moment to lose, so he told his wife in a word as he seized his hat, and set off as hard as he could. He had not even a moment to respond to little Dulcie's signals of affection, and waves and capers behind the wire-blind.

Anne, who had been in a curious maze all this time, sitting in her place at the table and watching him, and scarcely realising the relief of his presence as he busied himself in the old way for her comfort and Dulcie's, carving the chicken and waiting on them both, understood all at once how great the comfort of his presence had been. In her dull, sleepy way, she had been basking in sunshine for the last two hours, after the storm of the day before. She had untied her bonnet, and thrown it down upon a chair, and forgotten to smooth her sleek hair; her collar and ribbons were awry: her very face had lost its usual placidity,—it was altered and disturbed, and yet Jack thought he had never liked her looks so well, though he had never seen her so ruffled and self-forgetful in all the course of his married life.

For the moment Mrs. Trevithic was strangely happy in this odd reunion. She had almost forgotten at the instant the morning's jealousy and mad expedition—Colonel Hambledon's look of scorn and Mary Myles' words—in this new unknown happiness. It seemed to her that she had never in her life before realised what the comfort

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might be of someone to love, to hold, to live for. She watched the quick clever hands dispensing the food for which, to tell the truth, she had no very great appetite, though she took all that her husband gave her. Had some scales fallen from her pale wondering eyes? As he left the room, she asked herself in her stupid way, what he had meant. Was this one little glimpse of home the last that she would ever know? was it all over, all over? Anne tied her bonnet on again, and telling the maid to take care of little Dulcie, went out into the street again and walked off in the direction of the chapel. She had a vague wish to be there. She did not know that they would admit her; but no difficulties were made, and she passed for the second time under the big arch. Some one pointed out the way, and she pushed open a green-baize door and went in; and so Anne knelt in the bare little temple where the paupers' prayers were offered up—humble prayers and whitewash, that answer their purpose as well perhaps as Gothic, and iron castings, and flamboyant windows, as the beautiful clear notes of the choristers answering each other and bursting into triumphal utterance. The paupers were praying for their daily bread, hard, and dry, and butterless; for forgiveness for trespasses grosser and blacker perhaps than ours; for deliverance from evil of which Anne and others perhaps have never realised! and ending with words of praise and adoration which we all use in truth, but which mean far, far

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more when uttered from that darkness upon which the divine light beams most splendidly. Anne for the first time in her life was kneeling a pauper in spirit, ashamed and touched, and repentant.

There was no sermon, and Mrs. Trevithic got up from her knees and came away with her fellow-petitioners and waited in the courtyard for John. The afternoon sun of this long eventful day was shining on the stones and casting the shadows of the bars and bolts, and brightening sad faces of the old men and women, and the happy faces of two people who had also attended the service, and who now advanced arm-in-arm to where Anne was standing. She started back as she first saw them; they had been behind her in the chapel, and she had not known that they were there.

The sight of the two had brought back with it all the old feeling of hatred, and shame, and mistrust; all the good that was in her seemed to shrink and shrivel away for an instant at their approach, and at the same time came a pang of envious longing. They seemed so happy together; so *one*, as, with a glance at one another, they both came forward. Was she all alone when others were happy? had she not of her own doing put her husband away from her, and only come to him to reproach and leave him again? For a woman of such obstinacy and limited perception as Mrs. Trevithic to have settled that a thing was to be, was reason enough for it to happen; only a longing,

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passionate longing, came, that it might be otherwise than she had settled; that she might be allowed to stay—and a rush of the better feelings that had overcome her of late kept her there waiting to speak to these two who had scorned her. It was they who made the first advance.

'I want to ask you to forgive me,' said Mary, blushing, 'anything I may have said. Your husband has done us both such service, that I can't help asking you for his sake to forget my hastiness.'

'You see we were taken aback,' said the Colonel, not unkindly. 'Shake hands, please, Mrs. Trevithic, in token that you forgive us, and wish us joy. I assure you we are heartily sorry if we pained you.' Anne flushed and flushed and didn't speak, but put out her hand,—not without an effort. 'Are you going back directly, or are you going to stay with your husband?' said the Colonel, shaking her heartily by the hand.

Poor Anne looked up, scared, and shrank back once more,—she could not bear to tell them that she did not know. She turned away all hurt and frightened, looking about for some means of escape, and then at that moment she saw that John was coming up to them across the yard from the office where he had gone to leave his surplice.

'Oh, John,' she said, still bewildered, and going to

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meet him, and with a piteous face, 'here are Colonel Hambledon and Mary.'

'We have come to ask for your congratulations,' the Colonel said, laughing and looking very happy; 'and to tell you that your matchmaking has been successful.'

Mary Myles did not speak, but put out her hand to Trevithic.

Mrs. Trevithic meanwhile stood waiting her sentence. How new the old accustomed situations seem as they occur again and again in the course of our lives. Waters of sorrow overwhelm in their depths, as do the clear streams of tranquil happiness, both rising from distant sources, and flowing on either side of our paths. As I have said, the sight of these two, in their confidence and sympathy, filled poor Anne's heart with a longing that she had never known before. Mary Myles, I think, guessed what was passing in the other's mind—women feel one another's passing emotions—but the good Colonel was utterly unconscious.

'We have been asking your wife if she remains with you, or if she is going back directly,' said he. 'I thought perhaps you would both come to dine with us before we go.'

There was a mist before Anne's eyes, an unspeakable peace in her heart, as Jack drew her hand through his arm, and said, in his kind voice, 'Of course she stays; I am not going to let my belongings go away again, now that I have got them here.'

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As they were walking back to the inn together, Anne told her husband of her morning's work, and John sighed as he listened.

'We have both something to forgive,' he said once more, looking at her with his kind speaking eyes.

Anne winced and looked away, and then her heart turned again, and she spoke and said, with real sensibility,—

'I have nothing to forgive, John. I thought you were in the wrong, but it was I from the beginning.'

After a little time Trevithic and Anne and Dulcie went to live together in the old house in Bolton Fields. The woman was humbled, and did her best to make her husband's home happy, and John too remembered the past, and loved his wife, with all her faults, and did not ask too much of her, and kept clear, as best he could, of possible struggles and difficulties. His life was hard, but blows and fatigue he did not grudge, so long as he could help to deliver the land. Foul caverns were cleansed, ignorant monsters were routed, dark things were made light. He was not content in his parish to drive away evil; he tried his best and strove to change it, and make it into good. These tangible dragons and giants were hard to fight, but once attacked they generally succumbed in the end, and lost perhaps one head, or a claw in each successive encounter, and then other champions rose up, and by degrees

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the monster began to fall and dwindle away. But poor Trevithic's work is not over. Another giant is coming to meet him through the darkness. He is no hideous monster of evil like the rest; his face is pitiless, but his eyes are clear and calm. His still voice says, 'Hold,' and then it swells by degrees, and deafens all other sound. 'I am a spirit of truth, men call me evil because I come out of the darkness,' the giant cries; 'but see my works are good as well as bad! See what bigotry, what narrow prejudice, what cruelty and wickedness and intolerance I have attacked and put to rout!' In the story-book it is Jack who is the conqueror; he saws through the bridge by which the giant approaches, and the giant falls into the moat and is drowned. But, as far as I can see, the Jacks of this day would rather make a way for him than shut him out; some of the heroes who have tried to saw away the bridge have fallen into the moat with their enemy, and others are making but a weak defence, and in their hearts would be glad to admit him into the palace of the King.

Mrs. Trevithic rarely goes into the garden at the back of her house. The other day, being vexed with her husband about some trifling matter, she followed him out to remonstrate. He was standing with Dulcie by the prickly holly-tree that she remembered so well, and seeing her coming he put out his hand with a smile. The words of reproach died away on Anne's lips, and two bright

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spots came into her cheeks, as with a very rare display of feeling she suddenly stooped and kissed the hand that held hers.

As I finish the story of Jack Trevithic, which, from the play in which it began, has turned to earnest, H. looks up from her knitting, and says that it is very unsatisfactory, and that she is getting tired of calling everything by different names; and she thinks she would like to go back to the realities of life again. In my dream-world they have been forgotten, for the fire is nearly out and the grey mist is spreading along the streets. It is too dark to write any more—an organ is playing a dismal tune, a carriage is rolling over the stones; so I ring the bell for the lamp and the coals, and Susan comes in to shut the shutters.

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A YOUNG PRINCE

DEDICATED TO

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A YOUNG PRINCE.

THIS little introduction is to open the door of a home that was once, in a house in a pleasant green square in London —a comfortable family house, with airy and light and snug corners, and writing-tables, and with pictures hanging from the walls of the drawing-room, where the tall windows looked out upon the trees, and of the study upstairs where the father sat at his work.

Here were books and china pots and silver inkstands, and a hundred familiar things all about the house, which the young people had been used to for so long that they had by degrees come to live for them with that individual life with which inanimate things live for the young. Sometimes in the comfortable flicker of the twilight fire the place would seem all astir in the dance of the bright fires which burned in that hearth—fires which then seemed to be, perhaps, only charred coal and wood and ashes, but whose rays still warm and cheer those who were gathered round the home hearth so many years ago.

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On one side of the fireplace hung a picture which had been painted by Miss Edgar, and which represented a pretty pale lady, with her head on one side. The artist had christened her Laura. On the chimney-piece, behind the old red pots, the little Dresden china figures, the gilt and loudly ticking clock, stood the picture of a kind old family friend, with a friendly, yet troubled expression in his countenance: and then, against a panel, hung a little water-colour painted by Hunt, and representing the sweet little heroine of this short history. Opposite to her for a while, was a vacant space, until one summer, in Italy, the father happened to buy the portrait of a little Dauphin or Neapolitan Prince, with a broad ribbon and order, and soft fair hair; and when the little Prince had come back from Italy and from a visit to Messrs. Colnaghi's, he was nailed up in his beautiful new frame on the opposite panel to the little peasant girl. There had been some discussion as to where he was to be placed, and one night he was carried up into the study, where he was measured with another little partner, but the little peasant girl matched him best: although the other was a charming and high-born little girl. Only a short time before Messrs. Colnaghi had sent her home, in a gilt and reeded frame, a lovely little print of one of Sir Joshua's pictures. She lived above in the study, and was christened Lady Marjory by the young people, who did not know the little lady's real name. And it happened that, one

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night in this long ago of which I am writing, one of these young folks, sitting basking in the comfortable warmth of the fire, dreamt out a little history of the pictures, that were lighting up in the firelight, and nodding and smiling at her as pictures do. It was a revelation which she wrote down at the time, and which she firmly believed in when she wrote it. Perhaps this short explanation will be enough to make the little history intelligible as it was written, without any other change.

There was once a funny little peasant maiden in a big Normandy cap and blue stockings, and a bright-coloured kerchief, who sat upon a bank, painted all over with heather and flowers, with her basket at her feet, and who looked out at the world with two blue eyes and a sweet artless little smile which touched and softened quite gruff old ladies and gentlemen who happened to see her hanging up against the parlour wall.

Opposite to the little peasant maiden was a lady of much greater pretensions. No other than Petrarch's Laura, indeed, in a pea-green gown, with a lackadaisical expression and her head on one side. But it was in vain she languished and gave herself airs;—everybody went up first to the grinning little peasant maid and cried, 'Oh, what a dear little girl!'

At first the child, who, you know, was a little French child, did not understand what they were saying, and

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would beg Mrs. Laura to translate their remarks. This lady had brought up a large family (so she explained to the old gentleman over the chimney-piece), and did not think it right to turn little girls' heads with silly flattery; and so, instead of translating rightly, she would tell the little maiden that they were laughing at her big cap or blue stockings.

'Let them laugh,' says the little maid, sturdily; 'I am sure they look very good-natured, and don't mean any harm,' and so she smiled in their faces as sweetly as ever. And quite soon she learnt enough to understand for herself.

Although Laura was so sentimental she was not utterly heartless, and she rather liked the child; and sometimes when she was in a good temper would tell her great long stories about her youth, and the south, and the gentlemen who were in love with her—and that one in particular who wrote such heaps and heaps of poetry; and go on about troubadours and the belle passion, while the little girl wondered and listened, and respected Laura more and more every day.

'How can you talk such nonsense to the child?' said the old gentleman over the chimney.

'Ah! that is a man's speech,' said the lady in green, plaintively. 'Nonsense!—yes, silent devotion. Yes, a heart bleeding inwardly—breaking without one outward sign; that is, indeed, the nonsense of a faithful woman's

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love! There are some things no man can understand—no man!'

'I am surprised to hear *you* say so,' said the old gentleman, politely.

'Are you alluding to that creature Petrarch?' cried Laura. 'He became quite a nuisance at last. Always groaning and sighing, and sending me scrawls of sonnets to decipher, and causing dissension between me and my dear husband. The man disgraced himself in the end by taking up with some low, vulgar minx or other. That is what you will find,' she continued, addressing the little girl,—'men are false; the truth is not in them. It is our sad privilege to be faithful—to die breathing the name beloved; heighho!' and though she spoke to the little girl, she looked at the old gentleman over the chimney-piece.

'I hear every day of a new arrival expected among us,' said he, feeling uncomfortable, and wishing to change the subject; 'a little Prince in a blue coat all covered over with diamonds.'

'A Prince!' cried Laura, brightening up,—'delightful! You are, perhaps, aware that I have been accustomed to such society before this?'

'This one is but a child,' said the old gentleman; 'but they say he is a very pretty little fellow.'

'Oh, I wonder—I wonder if he is the little Prince I

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dreamt of,' thought the little girl. 'Oh, how they are all talking about him.'

'Of course they will put him in here,' said Laura. 'I want to have news of the dear court.'

'They were talking of it,' said the old gentleman. 'And the other night in the study they said he would make a nice pendant for our little friend here.'

When the little peasant maiden heard this, her heart began to beat, so that the room seemed to swim round and round, and if she had not held on by the purple bank she would certainly have slipped down on to the carpet.

'I have never been into the study,' said Laura, fractiously; 'pray, who did you meet there when they carried you up the other night to examine the marks on your back?'

'A very delightful circle,' said the old gentleman; 'several old friends, and some very distinguished people:—Mr. Washington, Dr. Johnson, the Duke, Sir Joshua, and a most charming little lady, a friend of his, and all his R.A.'s in a group. Our host's great-grandfather is also there, and Major André, in whom I am sure all gentle ladies must take an interest.'

'I never heard of one of them,' said Laura, tossing her head. 'And the little girl, pray who is she?'

'A very charming little person, with round eyes, and

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a muff, and a big bonnet. Our dear young friend here would make her a nice little maid.'

The little peasant child's heart died within her. 'A maid! Yes, yes; that is my station. Ah, what a little simpleton I am. Who am I that the Prince should look at me? What was I thinking about? Ah, what a silly child I am.'

And so, when night came, she went to sleep very sad, and very much ashamed of herself, upon her purple bank. All night long she dreamed wild dreams. She saw the little Prince coming and going in his blue velvet coat and his long fair hair, and sometimes he looked at her scornfully.

'You low-born, wretched little peasant child,' said he, 'do you expect that I, a Prince, am going to notice you?'

But sometimes he looked kind, and once he held out his hand; and the little girl fell down on her knees, in her dreams, and was just going to clasp it, when there came a tremendous clap of thunder and a great flash of lightning, and waking up with a start, she heard the door bang as someone left the room with a candle, and a clock struck eleven, and some voices seemed dying away, and then all was quite dark and quiet again.

But when morning came, and the little girl opened her eyes, what was, do you think, the first thing she saw leaning up against the back of the chair? Anybody who

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has ever been in love, or ever read a novel, will guess that it was the little Prince, in his blue coat, with all his beautiful orders on, and his long fair hair, and his blue eyes already wide open and fixed upon the little maid.

'Ah, madam,' said he, in French, 'at last we meet. I have known you for years past. When I was in the old palace in Italy, I used to dream of you night after night. There was a marble terrace outside the window with statues standing in the sun, and orange-trees blooming year by year. There was a painted ceiling to the room, with flying figures flitting round a circle. There was a great blue sky without, and deep shadows came striking across the marble floor day after day at noon. And I was so weary, oh! so weary, until one night I saw you in my dreams, and you seemed to say, "Courage, little Prince, courage. I, too, am waiting for you. Courage, dear little Prince." And now, at last we meet, madam,' he cried, clasping his hands. 'Ah! do not condemn me to despair.'

The little peasant maiden felt as if she could die of happiness.

'Oh, Prince, Prince,' she sobbed, 'oh, what shall I say? Oh, I am not worthy of you. Oh, you are too good and great for such a little wretch as I. There is a young lady upstairs who will suit you a thousand times better;

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and I will be your little maid, and brush your beautiful coat.'

But the Prince laughed away her scruples and terrors, and vowed she was fit to be a princess any day in all the year; and, indeed, the little girl, though she thought so humbly of herself, could not but see how well he thought of her. And so, all that long happy day, the children talked and chattered from morning to night, rather to the disgust of Laura, who would have preferred holding forth herself. But the old gentleman over the chimney looked on with a gentle smile in his kind red face, and nodded his head encouragingly at them every now and then.

All that day the little peasant maiden was perfectly happy, and, when evening fell, went to sleep as usual upon her flowery bank, looking so sweet and so innocent that the little Prince vowed and swore to himself that all his life should be devoted to her, for he had never seen her like, and that she should have a beautiful crown and a velvet gown, and he happy for ever and ever.

Poor little maiden! When the next morning came, and she opened her sweet blue eyes, alas! it was in vain, in vain—in vain to this poor little loving heart. There stood the arm-chair, but the Prince was gone. The shutters were open, the sunshine was streaming in with the fresh morning air; but the room was dark and dreary and empty to her. The little Prince was no longer there, and if she thought she could die of happiness the day before

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to-day it seemed as if she must live for ever, her grief was so keen, the pang so cruel, that it could never end.

Quite cold and shivering, she turned to Laura, to ask if she knew anything; but Laura could only inform her that she had always said so—men were false—silent devotion, hearts breaking without one sign, were a woman's privilege, &c. But, indeed, the little peasant girl hardly heard what she was saying.

'The housemaid carried him off into the study, my dear,' said the old gentleman, very kindly, 'this morning before you were awake. But never mind, for she sneezed three times before she left the room.'

'Oh, what is that to me?' moaned the little peasant maiden.

'Don't you know?' said the old gentleman, mysteriously. 'Three sneezes on a Friday break the enchantment which keeps us all here, and to-night at twelve o'clock we will go and pay your little Prince a visit.'

The clock was striking twelve when the little peasant girl, waking from an uneasy dream, felt herself tapped on the shoulder.

'Come, my dear, jump,' said the old gentleman, holding out his hand, and leaving the indignant Laura to scramble down by herself as best she could.

This she did, showing two long thin legs, cased in blue silk stockings, and reached the ground at last, natu-

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rally very sulky, and greatly offended by this want of attention.

'Is this the way I am to be treated? said she, shaking out her train, and brushing past them into the passage.

There she met several ladies and gentlemen hurrying up from the dining-room, and the little Prince, in the blue coat, rushing towards the drawing-room door.

'You will find your love quite taken up with the gentleman from the chimney-piece,' said Laura, stopping him spitefully. 'Don't you see them coming hand-in-hand? He seems quite to have consoled her for your absence.'

And alas! at that instant the poor little maiden, in an impulse of gratitude, had flung her arms round her kind old protector. 'Will you really take me to him?' she cried; 'oh, how good, how noble you are.'

'Didn't I tell you so?' said Laura, with a laugh.

The fiery little Prince flashed up with rage and jealousy. He dashed his hand to his forehead, and then when the little peasant maid came up suddenly, all trembling with shy happiness, he made her a very low and sarcastic bow and turned upon his heel.

Ah, me! Here was a tragedy. The poor little girl sank down in a heap on the stairs all insensible. The little Prince, never looking once behind, walked up very stately straight into the study again, where he began to

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make love to Sir Joshua's little lady with the big bonnet and the big round eyes.

There was quite a hum of conversation going on in the room. Figures coming and going and saluting one another in a courtly old-fashioned way. Sir Joshua, with his trumpet, was walking up and down arm-in-arm with Dr. Johnson; the doctor scowling every now and then over his shoulder at Mr. Washington's bust, who took not the slightest notice. 'Ha! ten minutes past midnight,' observed the General, looking at the clock. 'It is, I believe, well ascertained that there exists some consider able difference between the hour here and in America. I know not exactly what that difference is. If I did I could calculate the time at home.'

'Sir,' said Doctor Johnson, 'any fool could do as much.'

The bust met this sally with a blank and haughty stare, and went on talking to the French lady who was leaning against the cabinet.

In the meantime the members of the Royal Academy had all come clambering down from their places, leaving the model alone in the lamp-lighted hall where they had been assembled. He remained to put on his clothes and to extinguish the lights which had now been burning for some hundred years. At night, when we are all lying stretched out on our beds, how rarely we think of the companies gathering and awakening in our darkened

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rooms below. Mr. H. C. Andersen was one of the first to note these midnight assemblies, and to call our attention to them. In a very wise and interesting book called *The Nutcracker of Nuremberg* (written by some learned German many years ago) there is a curious account of one of these meetings, witnessed by a little wakeful girl. On this night, alas! no one was waking; the house was dim with silence and obscurity, and the sad story of my little peasant maiden told on with no lucky interruption. Poor, poor little maiden! There she lay a little soft round heap upon the stairs. The people coming and going scarcely noticed her, so busy were they making the most of their brief hour of life and liberty. The kind old gentleman from over the chimney-piece stood rubbing her little cold hands in his, and supporting her drooping head upon his knee. Through the window the black night trees shivered and the moon rose in the drifting sky. The church steeple struck the half hour, and the people hurried faster and faster.

'Tira, lira, lira,' sung a strange little figure dressed in motley clothes, suddenly stopping on its way. 'What have we here? What have we here? A little peasant maid fainting in the moonlight—an old gentleman trying to bring her too! Is she your daughter, friend? Is she dead, or sick, or shamming? Why do you waste your precious moments? Chuck her out of window, Toby. Throw the babby out of window. I am Mr. Punch off the inkstand;'

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and with another horrible chuckle the little figure seemed to be skipping away.

'Stop, sir,' said the old gentleman, very sternly. 'Listen to what I have to tell you. If you see a little Prince upstairs in a blue velvet coat tell him from me that he is a villain and a false heart; and if this young lady dies of grief it is he who has killed her; she was seeking him when he spurned her. Tell him this, if you please, and ask him when and where he will be pleased to meet me, and what weapons he will choose.'

'I'll tell him,' said Mr. Punch, and he was off in a minute. Presently he came back (somewhat to the old gentleman's surprise). 'I have seen your little Prince,' said he, 'and given him your message; but I did not wait for an answer. 'Twere a pity to kill him, you cruel-hearted old gentleman. What would the little girl say when she came to life?' And Punchinello, who was really kind-hearted, although flighty at first and odd in manner, knelt down and took the little pale girl into his arms. Her head fell heavily on his shoulder. 'Oh, dear! What is to be done with her?' sighed the old gentleman, helplessly wringing his hands and looking at her with pitiful eyes; and all the while the moon streamed full upon the fantastic little group.

Meantime the little Prince upstairs had been strutting

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up and down hand in hand with the English beauty, little Lady Marjory, of the round brown eyes. To be sure he was wondering and longing after his little peasant maiden all the while, and wistfully glancing at the door. But not the less did he talk and make gallant speeches to her little ladyship, who only smiled and took it all as a matter of course, for she was a young lady of the world and accustomed to such attentions from gentlemen. It naturally followed, however, that the Prince, who was thinking of other things, did not shine as usual in conversation.

Laura had made friends with the great-grandfather, who was an elegant scholar and could speak the most perfect Italian. 'See what a pretty little pair,' said he; 'how well matched they are.'

'A couple of silly little chits,' said she, 'what can they know of love and passion?' and she cast up a great quavering glance with her weak blue eyes. 'Ah! believe me, sir,' said she, 'it is only at a later age that women learn to feel that agonising emotion, that they fade and pine away in silence. Ah-ha! What a tale would it be to tell, that untold story of woman's wrongs and un—unrequited love!'

'Ookedookedoo, there's a treat in store for you, young man,' said Mr. Punch, skipping by. 'Will you have my ruffles to dry your tears? Go it, old girl.' And away he went, leaving Laura speechless from indignation. He went

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on to where the Prince was standing, and tapped him on the shoulder.

'Where do you come from, you strange little man?' said Lady Marjory.

'There are many strange things to be seen to-night,' said Punch, mysteriously hissing out his words. 'There's a little peasant girl fainting and dying in the moonlight; she was coming to find her love, and he spurned her; and there is an old gentleman trying to bring her to life. Her heart is breaking, and he wants blood to anoint it, he says,—princely blood—shed in the moonlight, drop by drop from a false heart, and it is for you to choose the time and the place. This lady will have to find another cavalier, and will she like him, Prince, with fool's cap and bells, and a hump before and behind? In that case,' says Mr. Punch, with a caper, 'I am her very humble servant.'

Lady Marjory did not answer, but looked very haughty, as fashionable young ladies do, and Mr. Punch vanished in an instant.

'I hope I shall never see that person again,' said she. 'The forwardness of common people is really unbearable. Of course he was talking nonsense. Little Prince, would you kindly hold my muff while I tie my bonnet-strings more securely?'

The Prince took the muff without speaking, and then dropped it on the floor unconsciously. Now at last he

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saw clearly, in an instant it was all plain to him; he was half distracted with shame and remorse. There was a vision before his eyes of his little peasant maiden—loved so fondly, and, alas! wantonly abandoned and cruelly deserted—cold and pale and dying down below in the moonlight. He could not bear the thought; he caught Lady Marjory by the hand.

'Come,' said he, 'oh, come. I am a wretch, a wretch. Oh, I thought she had deceived me. Oh, come, come! Oh, my little peasant maiden. Oh, how I loved her!'

Lady Marjory drew herself up. 'You may go, Prince, wherever you may wish,' she said, looking at him with her great round eyes, 'but pray go alone; I do not choose to meet that man again. I will wait for you here, and you can tell me your story when you come back.' Lady Marjory, generous and kind-hearted as she was, could not but be hurt at the way in which, as it seemed, she too had been deceived, nor was she used to being thrown over for little peasant maidens.

The little Prince with a scared face looked round the room for someone with whom to leave her, but no one showed at that instant, and so, half-bewildered still and dreaming, he rushed away.

Only a minute before the old gentleman had said to Punchinello, 'Let us carry the little girl out upon the balcony, the fresh air may revive her.' And so it happened that the little Prince came to the very landing where they

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had waited so long, and found no signs of those for whom he was looking.

He ran about desperately, everywhere asking for news, but no one had any to give him. Who ever has? He passed the window a dozen times without thinking of looking out. Blind, deaf, insensible, are we not all to our dearest friend outside a door? to the familiar voice which is calling for us across a street? to the kind heart which is longing for us behind a plaster wall maybe. Blind, insensible indeed, and alone; oh, how alone! He first asked two ladies who came tottering upstairs, helplessly on little feet, with large open parasols, though it was in the middle of the night. One of them was smelling at a great flower with a straight stalk, the other fanning herself with a dried lotus-leaf; but they shook their heads idiotically, and answered something in their own language—one of those sentences on the tea-caddies, most likely. These were Chinese ladies from the great jar in the drawing-room. Then he met a beautiful little group of Dresden china children, pelting each other with flowers off the chintz chairs and sofas, but they laughed and danced on, and did not even stop to answer his questions. Then came a long procession of persons all dressed in black and white, walking sedately, running, sliding up the banisters, riding donkeys, on horses, in carriages, pony-chaises, omnibuses, bathing-machines; old ladies with bundles, huge umbrellas, and band-boxes; old

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gentlemen with big waistcoats; red-nosed gentlemen; bald gentlemen, muddled, puzzled, bewildered, perplexed, indignant. Young ladies, dark-eyed, smiling, tripping and dancing in hats and feathers, curls blowing in the wind, in ball-dresses, in pretty morning costumes; school-boys with apple cheeks; little girls, babies, pretty servant-maids; gigantic footmen (marching in a corps); pages walking on their heads after their mistresses, chasing Scotch terriers, smashing, crashing, larking, covered with buttons.

'What is this crowd of phantoms, the ghosts of yesterday, and last week?'

'We are all the people out of Mr. Leech's picture-books,' says an old gentleman in a plaid shooting-costume; 'my own name is Briggs, sir; I am sorry I can give you no further information.'

Any other time, and the little Prince must have been amused to see them go by, but to-night he rushes on despairingly; he only sees the little girl's pale face and dying eyes gleaming through the darkness. More Dresden, more Chinese; strange birds whirr past, a partridge scrambles by with her little ones. Gilt figures climb about the cornices and furniture; the bookcases are swarming with busy little people; the little gold cupid comes down off the clock, and looks at himself in the looking-glass. A hundred minor personages pass by, dancing, whirling in bewildering circles. On the walls the papering turns into

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a fragrant bower of creeping flowers ; all the water-colour landscapes come to life. Rain beats, showers fall, clouds drift, light warms and streams, water deepens, wavelets swell and plash tranquilly on the shores. Ships begin to sail, sails fill, and away they go gliding across the lake-like waters so beautifully that I cannot help describing it, though all this, I know, is of quite common occurrence and has been often written about before. The little Prince, indeed, paid no attention to all that was going on, but went and threw himself down before the purple bank, and vowed with despair in his heart he would wait there until his little peasant maiden should come again.

There Laura saw him sitting on a stool, with his fair hair all dishevelled, and his arms hanging wearily. She had come back to look for one of her pearl earrings, and when she had discovered it, thought it would be but friendly to cheer the Prince up a bit, and, accordingly, tapped him facetiously on the shoulder, and declared she should tell Lady Marjory of him. 'Waiting there for the little peasant child; oh, you naughty fickle creature!' said she, playfully.

'You have made mischief enough for one night. Go! said the Prince, looking her full in the face with his wan wild eyes, so that Laura shrank away a little abashed, and then he turned his back upon her, and hid his face in his hands.

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So the sprightly Laura, finding that there was no one to talk to her, frisked up into the study again, and descrying Lady Marjory standing all by herself, instantly joined her.

This is certainly a lachrymose history. Here was Lady Marjory sobbing and crying too! Her great brown eyes were glistening with tears, and the drops were falling—pat—pat upon her muff, and the big bonnet had tumbled off on her shoulders, and the poor little lady looked the picture of grief and melancholy.

'Well, I never!' said Mrs. De Sade. 'More tears. What a set of silly children you are! Here is your ladyship, there his little highness, not to mention that absurd peasant child, who is coming upstairs and looking as white as a sheet, and who fainted away again when I told her that the Prince's intended was here, but not the Prince. As for her—I never had any pa . . .'

'His highness? The Prince do you mean,—is he safe, then?' said Lady Marjory, suddenly stopping short in her sobs. 'Tell me immediately when, where, how, did you see him?'

'The naughty creature, I gave him warning,' said Laura, holding up one finger, 'and so I may tell your ladyship without any compunction. Heigho, I feel for your ladyship. I can remember past times;—woman is doomed, doomed to lonely memories; Men are false, the truth is not . . . .'

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'Has he fought a duel,—is he wounded? Oh, why did I let him go!' cried Lady Marjory, impetuously.

'He is wounded,' said Laura, looking very knowing; 'but men recover from such injuries. It is us poor women who die of them without a g-g-groan.' Here she looked up to see if the bust of General Washington was listening.

Lady Marjory seized her arm with an impatient little grip. 'Why don't you speak out instead of standing there maundering!' she cried.

'Hi-i-i,' squeaked the green woman. 'Well, then, he likes the peasant girl better than your ladyship, and it is his h-heart which is wounded. It would be a very undesirable match,' she continued confidentially, recovering her temper. 'As a friend of the family, I feel it my duty to do everything in my power to prevent it. Indeed, it was I who broke the affair off in the first instance. Painful but necessary. Who cares for a little shrimp of a peasant—at least—I am rather sorry for the child. But it can't be helped, and nobody will miss her if she *does* die of grief.'

'Die of grief!' said Lady Marjory, wonderingly.

'La, my dear, it's the commonest thing in the world,' remarked Laura.

'Die of grief,' repeated Lady Marjory; and just as she was speaking, in came through the door, slowly, silently stopping every now and then to rest, and then advancing

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once again, the old gentleman, and Punchinello, bearing between them the lifeless form of the little peasant maiden. They came straight on to where Lady Marjory was standing: they laid the child gently down upon the ground.

'We brought her here,' said the old gentleman, gloomily, 'to see if the Prince, who has killed her, could not bring her to life again.'

'O dear, O dear,' sighed Punchinello, almost crying.

'Poor little thing, dear little thing.' This was from Lady Marjory, suddenly falling on her knees beside her, rubbing her hands, kissing her pale face, sprinkling her with the contents of her smelling-bottle. 'She can't, and shan't, and mustn't die, if the Prince or if I can save her. He is heart-broken. You, madam,' she cried, turning to Laura, 'go down, do you hear, and bring him instantly! Do you understand me, or you will repent it all your life.' And her eyes flashed at her so that Laura, looking quite limp somehow, went away followed by Punchinello. In a minute the Prince came rushing in and fell on his knees beside Lady Marjory.

And so it happened that the little peasant maiden lying insensible in Lady Marjory's arms, opened her sad eyes, as the Prince seized her hand. His presence had done more for her than all the tender care of the two old fellows. For one instant her face lighted up with life and

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happiness, but then looking up into Lady Marjory's face, she sank back with a piteous, shuddering sigh.

The old gentleman was furious. 'Have you come to insult her?' he said to the Prince. 'To parade your base infidelity, to wound and to strike this poor little thing whom you have already stricken so sorely? You shall answer for this with your blood, sir, and on the spot I say.'

'Hold your stupid old tongue, you silly old gentleman,' said Mr. Punch. 'See how pale the little Prince looks, and how his eyes are dimly flashing. He has not come hither to triumph, but to weep and sing dirges. Is it not so, little Prince?'

'Weep, yes, and sing dirges for his own funeral,' cried the old gentleman, more and more excited. 'Draw, sir, and defend yourself, if you are a gentleman.'

But Lady Marjory, turning from one to the other, exclaimed,—

'Prince, dear Prince, you will not fight this good gentleman, who has taken such tender care of your little peasant maiden. Sir,' to the old gentleman, 'it would be you who would break her heart, were you to do him harm.'

'And why should you want to do him harm?' said the little peasant, rousing herself and looking up with a very sweet imploring look in her blue eyes, and clasping her hands. 'He has done me none. It is the pride and

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happiness of my life to think that he should ever have deigned to notice me. It would not have been fit, indeed, that he, a Prince, should have married a little low-born peasant like myself.'

The Prince, scarce knowing what he did, beat his forehead, dashed hot burning tears from his eyes.

'Sir,' said he to the old gentlemam, 'kill me on the spot; it is the only fate I deserve, it will be well to rid the earth of such a monster. Farewell, little maiden; farewell, Lady Marjory. You will comfort her when I am gone. And do not regret me; remember only that I was unworthy of your love or of hers.' And he tore open his blue velvet coat, and presented his breast for the old gentleman to pierce through and through.

Now Lady Marjory began to smile, instead of looking as frightened and melancholy as everybody else.

'Button up your coat, dear little Prince,' said she. 'You will have to wait long for that sword-thrust you ask for. Meantime you must console the little peasant girl, not I; for it is I who bid you farewell.'

'Ah, gracious lady,' cried the poor little monster, covering her hand with kisses, 'it is too late, too late; a man who has broken her heart, who has trifled with yours so basely, deserves only to die—only to die.'

'Let me make a confession,' said Lady Marjory, speaking with a tender sprightliness, while a soft gleam shone in her eyes. 'Our English hearts are cold, dear Prince, and

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slow to kindle. It is only now I learn what people feel when they are in love; and my heart is whole,' she added, with a blush.

Such kind words and smiles could not but do good work. The little Prince almost left off sobbing, and began to dry his eyes. Meanwhile, Lady Marjory turned to the little peasant maiden.

'You must not listen to him when he talks such nonsense, and is so tragic and sentimental,' she said. 'He thought you had deceived him, and cared for someone else. He sobbed it in my ear when he went away to find you.'

'Hey-de-dy-diddle,' cried Punchinello, capering about for joy; 'and I know who told him—the woman in green, to be sure. I heard her. Oh the languishing creature! Oh the pining wild cat! Oh what tender hearts have women? Oh what feelings—what gushing sentiment!'

'You hold *your* tongue, you stupid Mr. Punch,' said the old gentleman, who had put up his sword, and quite forgiven the little Prince.

'And so good-by, dear friends,' said Lady Marjory, sadly indeed, but with a face still beaming and smiling. 'See the moon is setting; our hour is ended. Farewell, farewell,' and she seemed to glide away.

'Ah, farewell;' echoed the others, stretching out their hands.

The last rays were streaming from behind the house-

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tops. With them the charm was ending. The Prince and the peasant girl stood hand in hand in the last lingering beams.

'Good-night,' said Punchinello, skipping away.

'Farewell,' said the old gentleman.

'Goodness! make haste,' said Laura, rushing downstairs, two steps at a time. . . . .

It seemed like a dream to the little peasant child, still standing bewildered. One by one the phantoms melted away, the moon set, and darkness fell. She still seemed to feel the clasp of the little Prince's hand in hers, she still heard the tones of his voice ringing in her ears, when she found herself once more on her bank of wild-flowers, and alone. . . . .

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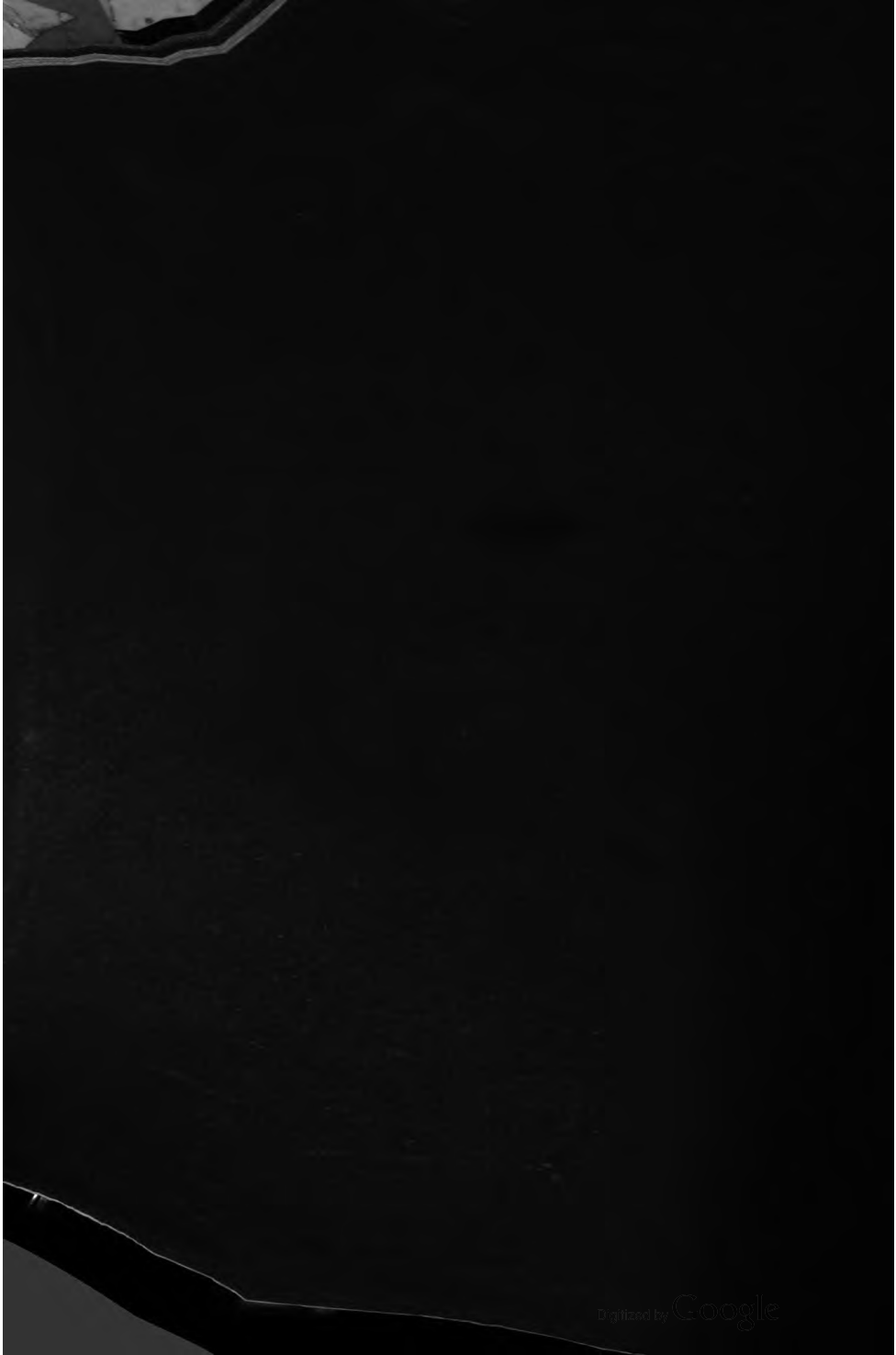
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